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PHARON'S DAUGHTER  
AND OTHER STORIES BY  
WILLIAM WALDOFF ASTOR



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**PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER**  
**AND OTHER STORIES**



*"And he gave her for a memorial and  
as a Talisman of Joy, a sapphire ram's head  
set in a fillet of gold, even the diadem  
of the King of the gods."*

*"Pharaoh's Daughter."*

# PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

AND OTHER STORIES

WILLIAM WATSON GOSSET

London  
MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD.  
1901





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AND OTHER STORIES

BY

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR

London

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*The contents of this volume have already appeared in the pages of  
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## PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

AT Patmos, in the library of the Monastery of St. John the Divine, a monk showed me a Greek Twelfth-Century Manuscript which, having partly read, he declared contained an Egyptian narrative of unusual import. The text appeared clear, albeit to me, of course, unintelligible, and was only defaced at the seams where the vellum had been folded. He translated into Italian the endorsement, which declared it to be the work of Eupithes, the son of Phidon, copied by him from a parchment duplicated by Periander, a scribe of the Alexandrian library. This collection having been destroyed by Amrou A.D. 651, the writing of Periander was prior to that date. As the monastery does not part with its manuscripts I proposed to the monk to sell me a transcription of the original, which he consented to make. When this reached me some weeks later, I sent it to a classical authority, by whom it was rendered into the following English. The repetition of lengthy titles, inevitable to Egyptian writings, has been omitted, and it has not been thought necessary to confuse the reader with brackets indicating unimportant lacunæ in the original text.

§

B



## THE MANUSCRIPT

A BEACON secretly kindled in darkness, to smoulder, it may be, long ; yet to speak at the last as men signal one to another with watch-fires. It shall tell of the love of Amon-Ra, the Sun-god, of fearless footsteps, and few will doubt the written word seeing that for a token Amon-Ra lays amorously upon the river the perpetual signet of his reflected brilliance.

The Priests of Maat, which is Truth, and of Wert-Hekaw, the lion-hearted, stood before Pharaoh, saying, 'Lord of the Western Land, the wise man, when he goes upon a journey, loads his asses with sacks : likewise will the King make ready his children for the journey of life, whether they be of the few that climb the shining hills, or of the many that are content with the nearest brookside, giving them the staff of discretion and the scrip of knowledge to be their light in darkness.' Therefore governors were set about Pharaoh's children to teach them to interweave the lotus with the laurel and the rose. And Ithobaal, a Phenician, a beautiful man, filled with the lore of the Chaldeans, one that had tasted the things that make life worth having, was appointed fan-bearer and reader to Amenteh, Pharaoh's daughter, that she might possess peace in life, and, after death, repose.

Many days sat they in the ivory gallery, beneath its gold-encrusted arch. The dwarf Khafre, which was the King's familiar, sat at the door forbidden to vex them with listening, and therefore ever fingering his lute, big bodied as himself and sweet sounding as the voice of one bringing gifts. Sitting thus



*"Pharaoh's Daughter."*



upon the cushioned alabaster floor, at the hour when Amon-Ra spreads his crimson banner across the westward sky, Amenteh asked concerning the gods of Phenicia, and Ithobaal answered, 'We have but one, whose name I bear, Baal, the Sun-god, whom the Egyptians call Amon-Ra, the only god whose gifts all humanity acknowledge. Whose rising is a cup brimming with gladness ; whose beams ripen the harvest, and paint the flowers, and illumine the eyes we love ; whose light gives the mountains their purple and the sea its diadem and at the close of day lends to earth a crowning and poetic charm.'

Moreover, being a man of war, he told Amenteh of lands beyond the sea where with a javelin he had slain a giant, adding with a smile, 'Who knows but I may come to my end at the hand of a little man !' Tyre, his native city, with its marble temple open to the sun, he declared the salt of the sea, as Egypt is the salt of the land, for his talk was like unpainted pictures. Then when she questioned him of star-reading and of the Chimera which is master of Red Magic, and which alone can stand before the Enchanter's wand, he answered, 'What better magic is there than success ?' Likewise when she asked, 'What shall I do to be happy ?' he answered, 'Hath any life worth living not at least one thrilling sorrow, or can aught be sweeter than the long-lived day ?' But once, the dwarf being called away, she murmured as to herself, 'What should be the purpose of a maiden's life ?' to which he whispered, 'What avails life if it be not in tune with love !' Then suddenly, as though these words had been of magical power, she kissed him passionately upon the lips.

At that time Pharaoh made a feast at Memphis, the city of the powerful Bull, for Sevech, King of the land of Midian, in the Hall of embroidered hangings. Where, having sacrificed, he seated Sevech at his right hand upon the chair of peace and gave him a girdle curiously wrought, and set a ring upon his hand. Likewise the dwarf Khafre anointed their heads with ointment and touched their ears with myrrh. The princes of the court sat according to their degree at a table apart. So when they had eaten eggs baked with bitter herbs, the minced flesh of a lamb, wrapped in savoury leaves, was set before them. And when they had drunk they did eat venison garnished with rice, after which Pharaoh took a roasted pigeon in his hand and parted it in sunder and gave thereof to Sevech for a sign that they were brothers, for Pharaoh feared him and his men of war. Then came the sweet-voiced girls, bearing matchless instruments, even their harps, and sat at Pharaoh's feet filling the air with delight. So with fruit and pastry the Kings emptied their wine jars, and Khafre crowned them with wreaths, bathing their hands with fragrant water. Finally Pharaoh saluted Sevech after the manner of the Egyptians, saying, 'May Bastet give thee the Sesame wine of long life,' at which words the priests let fly birds for all people to know that Pharaoh and Sevech should be forever friends.

When Sevech's heart was warm with wine, Pharaoh commanded his daughter to come before them, her ankles being girt with fillets of gold and her arms bound with pearls like tassels about the vine. But ere she danced she cast aside her slippers and her veil, standing rich haired for a hushed and



*"Pharaoh's Daughter."*



breathless moment motionless and resplendent. Then the minstrels forbore, save only that from the river of Oblivion, where the lotus flowers grow, came faintly the music of the flute-players, breathing into their bamboo flutes the music of the Night, and the music of them which sing the songs of the Morning. When Amenteh made an end of dancing, Sevech arose, and, emptying his wine-cup over his head, swore with an oath that she was beautiful. And lifting his quivering hand unto Pharaoh he cried, 'Thou shalt give her me to wife, or by all thy cage of gods I will sink thy nose in the ground, and will rend thy Kingdom, and hew thy people till the child shall seek its father in vain, and the jackals shall howl amid the ruins of this thy palace.'

Then Pharaoh answered, 'Thy words, O Circle of Light, are pleasant to me as riches after poverty.' So the following day Pharaoh sought Amenteh and disclosed to her the words of Sevech. But she covered her face saying, 'Can one graft a rose upon nettles, or shall I be the bride of one who is swarthy and whose land is a bleaching skeleton?' Then Pharaoh answered, 'Thou shalt indeed be made a Queen and drink deep of the glamour of life. Behold, Sevech's money is all gold and no silver, and his Kingdom is vast, so that whithersoever thou journey, whether it be with or against the wind, the land is still his. A land of rocks and sand whose groves are cacti, for it is the desert, nevertheless, what things thou shalt ask, whether it be camels or jewels, or raiment or handmaidens, will he cheerfully take for thee from his neighbours.' Then spake Amenteh, 'Lord of the two horns, thy daughter, who is the dust of thy feet, hath



heard it said that every ass thinks himself fit to stand with the King's horses.' Therefore was Pharaoh grieved and cried, 'Shall mine own child kindle a fire under my stool!' But he returned to Sevech and told him what Amenteh had said. Then when Khafre heard these things, he said unto Sevech, 'Dispenser of good things, give me a gift, and let my head be in thy hand if I do not read this riddle.' So Sevech gave him a gift and Khafre said, 'Be it known unto thee, O lover of knowledge, that there dwelleth in the palace a Phenecian, a beautiful man, and a Magician, who expounds to the Princess music and stars; such a man, sometimes, though not loud-tongued, aspires to the daughter of a King.' At which Sevech questioned the dwarf, saying, 'Who told thee this?' and Khafre laughed answering, 'The Chimera, which lurketh in the garden, in whose yellow eyes one may read the secrets of the Ages, even the web of Fate, hath revealed it.' So Sevech became as a panther of the South for rage and bade Khafre walk in the garden with this man, that he might know his face.

The garden of the Pharaohs, called heartsease, is set between the palace and the river. It is here the young women come to bathe, and here the Scribes, the Priests, the Princes, and the Prophets likewise come to talk upon the beautiful land of peace where the immortal acacias bloom. Wherein the Kings of Egypt each dedicate four figures: upon the palace wall an image of their guardian, whether it be Isis, the beautifully enthroned, or Thoth of the waving plumes, or Horus, the adorably silent. And among flowering plants the King's own image

with splendid crest is placed, and behind it a fountain of flowers, and on either hand the face of the woman he hath most loved, and the face of his dearest friend. Wherefore, forever, although unseen between the box-rows of that garden, are the footsteps of bygone days. It is here the King breathes the lotus incense and learns the mystical meaning of the fleeting river, which is Oblivion, bearing us on its fugitive tide. Beyond which river, in the distance, stretches that faint and shining horizon which presages a World beyond the tomb. There, beneath the bending boughs Pharaoh walks, gazing as a King should, beyond and above the transient things of Earth, knowing the praise of gardens and that every garden is a world. There also dwells the Chimera, which is the Master of the Magicians, lulled by the bamboo flute-players, knowing the secret of the Future, which is breathed in the meaning of a musical sound. To a man to whom music and the stars say nothing will the Chimera not speak, but at the close of day it cometh forth to stand beside the lotus flowers, gazing upon the western sky where, with each dying sunset, rekindles the deathless splendour of the past. For the Chimera's wisdom lies in the inspiration of luminous distance, where, beyond the palm-tops and the clouds, it divines the waving hands of Fate.

When Sevech had taken his bow and an Egyptian arrow, he hid himself in Pharaoh's garden; and when Ithobaal and the dwarf passed, he let fly the arrow, that it pierced Ithobaal and he fell. But Khafre lifted his voice and cried, 'Who hath done this thing?' And the guards of the palace drew forth the arrow, and behold, although it was the arrow of

an Egyptian, its feathers were trimmed after the manner of the desert. Then carried they Ithobaal to his chamber and the Chimera came and licked the blood where he had lain. But the Princes of Egypt and the Priests and the Officers of the Guard cried out upon Sevech, so that he fled from the city and came to the land of the Shepherd Kings and called his Captains together with all his host to march against the land of Egypt.

After Ithobaal was healed Pharaoh came privily to his chamber, and a fierce anger leaped to the King's eyes when he beheld Amenteh standing by the Phenician's bedside, and Pharaoh rebuked Ithobaal, saying, 'Thou hast bewitched my daughter!' But she answered unabashed, 'Shall I let this man suffer alone, seeing for my sake that cut-purse wounded him?' And she cried against the Shepherd King, 'If thou meet Sevech and a serpent, let the serpent go, but smite me Sevech.' Then Pharaoh sent her weeping to her handmaids, and commanded Ithobaal that he become that selfsame day a Priest of Amon-Ra.

Now when Pharaoh and his host were gathered on the borders of Midian, Sevech, big with victory and splendid as the right eye of the dawn, rode at the head of his horsemen towards the camp of the Egyptians to judge their number. And he came unaware into the midst of the Egyptian archers, where they lay hid, so that the Captains beside him were slain, and his horse fell, and he was left full of wounds on the ground. When his men beheld this they fled with a tumult till they vanished behind the uttermost hills, their horses flooded with foam. Then Pharaoh called his headsmen

and bade them tear out Sevech's tongue, whereat the Princes of Egypt laughed, saying, 'Prophesy now, thou sharp-fangs of the ruin of our palaces, wherein the jackals shall howl.' Then the headsmen heated gold, and poured it molten upon King Sevech's eyes, and Pharaoh mocked him, saying, 'Tell me, thou who hast beheld the beauty of my daughter, what is now the delight of thine eyes?'

(Three lines effaced)

. . . while Pharaoh was warring in Midian, Ithobaal came from the Temple which stands a bow-shot from the Palace and bowed before Amenteh, saying, 'Behold, O Princess, a messenger who falls seven times at thy feet. The command of Amon-Ra is that to-morrow night at the hour of the tuning of the lutes, when the crescent has sunk behind the palms, you come to him alone in the Court of his Temple, even in the mysterious Hall of the Rising Sun, that he may reveal the poem of life. And he—that is immortal as an echo, and who is awake when mortals sleep—shall be bound to you with the chain of Love, so that he shall betroth himself, in faithfulness, as the husband of your youth.'

That evening, at the hour of the tuning of the lutes, as Amenteh approached the Temple softly and unseen, its graceful and towering pillars in the starlight of that dustless air seemed made to lift the thoughts towards Heaven. In the midst of its ilexes, the Chambers of the Sun, with painted pillars and sculptured statues rose in silence above the little noise of men, and its grandeur acquired the significance of a supernatural inspiration. In its footworn courts

not one remained of all them that thronged by day, neither was heard the voice of the Priests that chant, nor the words of the Prophets that prophesy. So she paused beside the altar, whose carving in the darkness was like russet-stained ivory, and about which still hung a breath of the spice cakes which all that day the Vulture charmers had burned. When suddenly, a silent phantom advanced from the shadow of the night, as it were from the stones of the wall, and she beheld that it was Amon-Ra in the semblance of a beautiful man. Then were they powerfully and irresistibly drawn one to the other, and while through the night the nightingale sent the swift arrow of its thrilling song, he led her amid the ilexes and folded her in the embrace of his love. And listening to the ripple of the river of Oblivion, she knew that the delight of that hour would always seem near, and that however swiftly the years might glide upon its current, they could never bear it wholly from her into their fading distance.

Then whispered the Sun-god—he whose voice is as the sound of pipes to a hunter at rest—‘Be it added to the renown of Amon-Ra that he possessed the love of a beautiful woman, for which mortals are proud to die,—for which, alone, a god should aspire to live.’ And he gave her for a memorial and as a Talisman of Joy, a sapphire ram’s head set in a fillet of gold, even the diadem of the King of the gods, the carving whereof was beyond the cunning of the artificers of Egypt and its beauty more refined than the sparkling of many gems, so that whoever beholds it perceives that it is the gift of a god.

She answered, ‘After I am no more, and in the cycles of Time when the glory of Egypt is

## Pharaoh's Daughter

I I

departed, these silent walls, perhaps, shall keep the inspiration of the love of Amon-Ra and remain for ever beautiful.'

Then declared he, whose eyes are like the exuberant sight of the sunlit sea, 'As surely as sunshine on the mountains marks my passing footsteps, shalt thou stand with me hereafter amid the glory of the Sun, whose rising and setting outlives the transient things of Earth.'

Then, at the hour of the fading away of the heavenly ones, the never-setting stars, when Amenteh perceived the breath of dawn in her nostrils, she departed softly and unseen as she had come.

Now Pharaoh returned from the borders of Midian, and straightway called the dwarf Khafre, and privily bade him summon ten horsemen of the guard, and take Ithobaal and bind him and set him upon a camel and journey six days into the desolate places of the Desert, and six days back again without him. Therefore Osiris granted to the Phœnician the final and not least benediction of a swift and sudden departure—as one who lifts the drapery and passes to outer chambers to be seen no more. So although for many days none knew these things, thus was curiously accomplished the word which Ithobaal had spoken to Amenteh, that his end should be compassed by a little man. Wherefore Pharaoh caused Khafre to be seven times decorated with gold.

But when Pharaoh's daughter discovered what was done, she turned like a flaming fire upon the dwarf, and coming upon him unaware, reviled and cursed him and spat in his face. And she sought a sharp sword to slay Khafre, but ere it was found she fell in a swoon. Whereat the dwarf's face turned to

## Pharaoh's Daughter

ashy paleness and he feared to dwell in the Palace, although he was the King's familiar, for Amenteh hired men to take his life. From which time also the Sun-god appeared to her no more. Nevertheless, although the memory which alone survived to Amenteh became but a tragic shadow, it yet seemed, the rest of her days, more luminous and delightful than all else beside.

When the summer was come, Pharaoh's daughter walked with her handmaids through the palm orchard by the river, and the maidens cast aside their veils and slippers to bathe, for it was the heat of the day. So with the ripple of the river, blended the ripple of their mirth. And they were beautiful as crimson oleanders, and the water kissed their feet, and Amenteh was in their midst as the pearl set in a ring. Then she came upon a chest caught in the bulrushes, at the edge of the meadow grass, wherein was a babe. But before they laid a hand upon the chest, the child cried, and Amenteh's heart leaped within her. So she said, 'He shall be called Thut-Mosis, for from the water we take him.' But her handmaids laughed, saying, 'How know ye that it is a man child?' Whereat Amenteh was silent, but the Chimera came forth from among the wild hyacinths and lay at her feet and looked fixedly in her eyes. When the maidens lifted the chest they rejoiced, saying, 'Verily Sechet shall watch his sleep, and when he traverseth deep water Anubis shall lead him by the hand, and hereafter, Socharis, the crusher, the compeller of things, who holds the key of earthly felicity, shall unlock for him the portal of an everlasting abode.'

At which self-same hour Pharaoh rested in his garden watching the swelling of the river and giving

his mind to calm, oblivious for the moment to the sordid course of Time, and the silence of the garden was quickened only by the twittering of birds. At noon he had been borne to the interment of Ptah-Mes, Captain of the Horse, and had returned wearied with the noise and glitter of that pageant—the blaze of trumpets, the throng of mourners, the procession of slaves and burden-bearers with gazelles and peacocks, and ostriches and apes ; the populace attracted from shops and trellised housetops into the dazzling sunlight ; the strangers from afar, the camels and horses and barking dogs. Now, at the edge of the river, a kingfisher dived and in an instant of sudden illumination Pharaoh comprehended, with the light of a new and intuitive revelation, the multiplicity of influences whereof man is the curious product, and caught the grotesque resemblance that through all ages, beneath varying phases, lends to life the same characteristics with the same fateful and absurd reiteration. A sunbeam, flashed across his dream, changed illusion to reality. He understood with mental vision preternaturally clear, that, for himself, these things were past. Instinctively his lips moved in the phrase of a whispered farewell, but none listened—not even the gods. Till suddenly, before him rose the spirit of Ptah-Mes, whose body had been laid at rest that morning, who in life had been the companion of Pharaoh's youth, the friend and adviser of his maturity, and who now addressed him with ominous words.

‘Lo, the dead awaken, and the knot that bound is untied, and the Dream which the Seer could not interpret is revealed. The ruined greatness of thy successors shall linger alone amid the desolation of Egypt. From generation to generation, and from reign to



reign, the monuments shall become more and more silent,—their message spoken, their names obliterated, their last words scarcely understood. Yet even then, in those remote ages, shall the shades of the gods return to stand beside the open grave of their Egyptian Kingdom. This day hath been saved from the waters of Oblivion, one that shall bring strange and fearful calamities. Though born in obscurity, his name shall remain famous when thine, O Sethos, is forgotten. Though he eat of the ashes of bondage, he shall become greater than the lords of the thrones. Though an outcast and a fugitive, he shall spoil the Egyptians, and glory in the overthrow of their host. Though thou art passing away in the morning of Egypt, his words shall endure till the evening of the longest day.

Then Pharaoh's pierced and freezing heart knew that it was a presage, and as he started, the kingfisher rose from the water, and flew with flight of distant rustling wings away.

So when Pharaoh sprang to his feet in anger and affright and was told how a man-child had been drawn from the river of Oblivion, he cried, 'Ye waste time, let the child be slain and have done.' But none knew where to seek, for Amenteh had given money to an Hebrew woman to hide the child that it might be saved alive. And that night, when all the land of Egypt slept, Osiris, who is lord of the greatest of all Kingdoms, opened wide the portal, and beckoned, and Pharaoh passed beyond the transient things of Earth. So Seti-Meneph-Tah ruled in his father's stead and afflicted the Hebrews which were in bondage, wherefore Amenteh took Thut-Mosis and he became her son.

As years passed, Pharaoh's daughter often returned to sit in the Temple of Amon-Ra, to sing there as she sang in the days of her youth. And her prayer was thus : O sweet-voiced Isis, thou that tunest the lutes of the Evening, grant me a heart in tune with the song of birds at break of Day.

Thus gazing from the mysterious Hall of the Rising Sun, through long-drawn rhythmic hours across the waters of Oblivion, it came to be her gladness to believe that both the living and the dead forget not, but remember. Yea, from her gilded windows, across roof-tops and porticoes and hovels, her heart leaped ever toward the awakening beauty of the Dawn. At her feet stretched the life of the multitude, the life whose cares and duties and pleasures she understood without having tasted. And looking forth from the shadow of her retirement, and knowing that many on whom rests the effulgence of life are blind to its splendour, she thought, 'How would they envy me, who live in the darkness of Sorrow, did they know that I see and understand and love the light of Joy !' Nevertheless her heart, which had opened but once, closed forever, so that none, save only the Chimera, knew its secret. When her brother, King Seti-Meneph-Tah, offered her in marriage she would not, saying within herself, 'Shall I that have been loved by a god, wed with a man.' Likewise knowing she should be freed from the infirmity of age, she besought to be buried in a maiden's tomb, wherein neither man nor woman had lain.

When finally Osiris, in the darkness of an opening day, threw wide before Amenteh the land of turquoise and crystal which is the land of life, where

the old shall become young and the young shall never grow old, she bade her maidens lift her to the gilded window which looks toward the East. So behold, when she was seated in her accustomed place, and the curtain drawn aside, it was the break of day, and her face brightened at its coming radiance. And while they watched in silence she passed beyond the gates of Dawn, and her heart was lifted whither her eyes had so long been fixed—towards the land of the Rising Sun.

The Greek monk at Patmos was right in pronouncing the singular narrative contained in his manuscript one of unusual import. It ranks, with its quaint and musical repetitions, among the oldest love-stories of ancient times, and its authorship is doubtless lost 'in the River of Oblivion.' Imperfect as is our knowledge of the Pharaohs, we may believe they were not exempt from human frailty. It may also be affirmed that Pharaoh's daughter merely anticipated the Greeks in attributing to Amon-Ra, who was mythologically akin to Zeus, an amorous passion resembling those in which the Thunderer delighted. In all mythical ages the gods have shown a willingness to interest themselves so far in humanity as to make love to the beautiful daughters of men.

The second chapter of the second Book of Exodus gives significant intimation that Moses was bound to the Royal family of Egypt by a stronger tie than the charity which rescued a foundling. Had the Hebrew woman to whom the infant discovered among the bulrushes was entrusted, been its Mother, she would hardly have received wages to rear her own child. Had Moses been no more to Pharaoh's

daughter than the abandoned offspring of Hebrew servitude, there could have been little reason for his subsequent return to her, and still less that he should 'become her son.' In physical appearance the Hebrews and Egyptians were in marked contrast. Yet the Midianite girl, Zipporah, whom Moses married, describing to her father her meeting with him at the well, refers to him as 'an Egyptian,' which justifies the surmise that if Moses, a Hebrew, possessed the racial type of Egypt, it was due to a perfectly natural cause.

Some years ago at Ghizeh, amid the tombs of Queens and Princesses of the early dynasties, was exhumed the mummy of a woman, whose inscription declared her to be 'Amenteh, Pharaoh's daughter, unmarried, beautifully enthroned, and *the beloved of Amon-Ra.*' The features of the mummy case, usually intended as a crude presentment of the deceased, mark a type of exceptional grace and intelligence. The skeleton has been stripped of its wrappings, and the visitor from lands unknown to ancient Egypt, may behold, under glass, the crumbling fragments of one whose dramatic story identifies her with a scene the Old Testament has preserved and made familiar. Can it be that this was the Mother as well as the finder of the infant 'Thut-Mosis'?

Bound about the blackened brow, as in defiance of the grave's decay, was a sapphire ram's head of exquisite workmanship—a startling token, if the manuscript may be believed, of that amorous passion for the sake whereof its decorous phrase declares, 'Mortals are proud to die, and for which, alone, a god should aspire to live.'

## THE GHOSTS OF AUSTERLITZ

### *A CHRISTMAS STORY*

ON the 25th day of December, in the year of grace 1890, Captain Blythe, formerly of the 10th Rifles, sat in his cosy bachelor rooms in Piccadilly, luxuriously idling away the afternoon, partly in reverie of things past, partly in the perusal of that volume of 'Thiers' fascinating history of the campaigns of the great Napoleon which bears the suggestive title 'Austerlitz.' He had pictured the armies confronting one another, the sunrise over the misty snow-fields, the storming of the heights of Pratzen, diluting the martial story, once or twice, with milder reminiscences of his own campaignings in the Crimea and in Zululand, and had finally checked the French pursuit of the Allies for a comfortable anticipation of the turkey and champagne to come by and by. And thinking of the Christmas dinners that would that day be eaten in London, he asked himself who should speak so eloquently of the things that grace the season and link themselves with the memory of bygone Christmas days—the bright lights and happy voices, the full stockings and trinket-laden trees, the sleek congregations, the smoking joints and rare old fruity vintages

—as that starving poet whom, after twenty years, he had met at the church door, and whom he had bidden to dine that evening. Fine material that, he mused, with a glance at the holly wreath hanging in the window, to kindle a poet's fancy with cheerful suggestions of this frosty season placed midway between the decline of autumn and that flowery spring with whose promise one seeks to wreath the future. And settling himself at ease before the fire, he thought of his schoolmates trooping, fifty years ago, across the hayfields, of the honours he took at sixteen, of that ill-fated courtship at twenty—oh, shame upon thee, faithless Arabella!—of his poverty-stricken battle with the world, of journeyings and camp scenes in far countries, of that assegai thrust at Ulundi, and of the murderous look on the face of that Zulu as he fell shot through the head. The Captain was a sentimental man, despite all the hard knocks of life, and was wont to comfort himself with the reflection that every momentous experience adds a string to the lute, from the high note of success to the bass of sorrow, so that the accords of our nature should grow fuller and richer, if softer, with time. It was pleasanter to remember Arabella, years ago, as the slip of a girl she was, the night of that mid-summer moonlight walk, than as the stately matron she had grown, surrounded by her rich and obedient husband, and her half-dozen more or less unruly offspring.

The clock struck four, and lights were brought. In the next house a German *Fräulein* was lustily singing 'Der Erbkönig,' and Captain Blythe could faintly distinguish the weird, sweet ballad of the knightly and romantic Rhine, of the haunted ride

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amid storm and darkness, of the irresistibly persuasive goblin and his fairy daughters,—yet as the words ‘Erlkönig hat mir ein Leid gethan!’ rippled away, he stirred the fire and pooh-poohed the song, and growled that none but a German would have dreamt such nonsense as this of a boy, lured to death in the land of spirits, through his own imagination, while bodily clasped in his father’s arms. He walked to the window and peered through the wintry twilight upon the noiseless passers. The contrast which a bleak evening and flickering gas lamps and such indistinct forms presented to his blazing fireside usually offered a comforting suggestion, but on this particular day the figures flitted hither and thither with more serious meaning. Some were, perhaps, returning to cheerless homes; a few to carry the burden of a secret sorrow into the midst of the care-free; this or that one to watch this Christmas night beside a bed of illness. Bah! little concern it was of his whither they went, or what their errands. He resumed his book and finished the tragic story of the carnage and rout of the Russian and Austrian troops, until, in the quiet of that long afternoon, his eyes closed for the forty winks an elderly gentleman may allow himself before dinner.

He had been asleep but a moment when, in the first impression of what rapidly became a vivid dream, a cold hand closed roughly upon his wrist, and to his bewilderment he found himself in the grasp of a Cossack soldier, one of the very horsemen about whom he had been reading. And it seemed to him that they walked by night across the snow-fields of Austerlitz, passing between great frosted poplars, with glimmering camp-fires in the distance

and the stars shining in transcendent splendour overhead.

‘Where are you taking me?’ he gasped, in such scanty Russian as he had picked up at Sebastopol.

‘To the Czar,’ was the curt answer: ‘he has need of you.’

‘To the Czar!—in dressing-gown and slippers!’

‘His Majesty is too busy to notice.’

‘But I shall freeze to death!’

To this objection the Russian vouchsafed only a muttered word that resembled the snarl of a dog not to be trifled with. And looking more closely at his companion, Captain Blythe was startled to discover that it was Arabella’s husband disguised as a Cossack, but with an eyeglass in the right eye, and one hand chinking the sovereigns in his trousers pocket, as in life. They walked, as it seemed, for an hour, coming frequently upon vedettes and other tokens of the presence of a vast army. Once they nearly stumbled over the body of a dead Russian soldier, with a bullet through his brain, just where the Captain had shot the Zulu, and bearing, in the darkness, an astonishing resemblance to the black and distorted features of that ill-favoured savage. Farther on they passed a village church which would be fired and stormed on the following morning, and whose graveyard would be strewn with Austrian dead. But now, in the silent and luminous starlight, and beneath the solemn, snow-flecked trees, the headstones and crosses stood out like the sails of a fleet of phantom galleys frozen to a motionless repose.

A distant noise behind them caught the ear, and he and his guide instinctively turned to listen. It was the tumultuous shouting of many voices, a mile



away, and with the faint sound, as it moved from one side of the French camp to the other, went a sparkle of torches. Captain Blythe knew that it was the frenzied acclamation of the French soldiers to their Emperor as he made his famous visit to their bivouacs on the night before his greatest victory—an acclamation that, to this day, rings in the ear of whoever reads the story of Austerlitz. The thrilling vibration smote the air like the defiance of a nation, and seemed as prophetic of victory as the jubilant clamour of Gideon. It sounded human, yet savouring of the roar of some ferocious animal. And amid the cheers of an army glorying in its strength could be heard that exultant greeting, '*Vive l'Empereur ! Vive l'Empereur !*'

The clock on the mantel struck six, and the sound reached the sleeper indistinctly, like distant land-bells heard at sea ; and instantly their reverberation wove itself into his dream in a rhythmical cadence of the bells of the chapel they had left behind. Softly from afar it came, with poesy of incantation—that ringing melody whose voice awakes our happiest and our saddest memories. Its pealing was filled with harmonies of surpassing intensity, like the whisper of breaking waves. All the gladness of youth, all the ecstasy of love rang in the old man's soul through the music of those faint, far-sounding bells, until, with the mystery of an unutterable meaning, their ringing faltered, and was heard no more.

Captain Blythe and the Cossack resumed their walk ; and dawn appeared as they sighted the Allied headquarters.

Already the Austrian and Russian camps were astir with drum-beat and bugle-blast, and these

reveillés, sounding in a confused medley, impressed the Captain with their droll resemblance to dogs barking at daybreak to one another.

A moment later he stood in the presence of the Czar Alexander and of the Emperor Francis of Austria.

Both were seated at a camp-table, one side of which was covered with a map, whereon the Czar's eyes frequently rested, while upon the other had been spread a frugal breakfast of coffee, biscuit, and ham and eggs, to which the Austrian was applying himself. From a crackling fire of green logs without rose a cloud of aromatic smoke ; and before it bent two liveried moujiks, trying to coax forth a brighter blaze. The Czar was a man of fine presence, with florid face, clear grey eyes, thin sandy hair, and salient cheek-bones, which gave an appearance of force to his countenance. He wore a tight green dress-coat with *aiguillettes*, white buckskin breeches, and long polished boots with silver spurs. Upon his shoulders was a mantle, and his cocked hat lay on a chair near by. The Austrian Emperor looked equally splendid in a white dress-coat with gold collar and tight breeches and boots ; and he also, while sipping his coffee, held a cloak about him. His intellectual feebleness was apparent, as he asked in guttural German—

‘Have my officers their queues properly powdered this morning?’

But before Blythe could declare his ignorance upon this particular, the Czar addressed him in excellent French, with quick, incisive utterance.

‘I have sent for you, Monsieur le Capitaine, because you know this field of battle. You have

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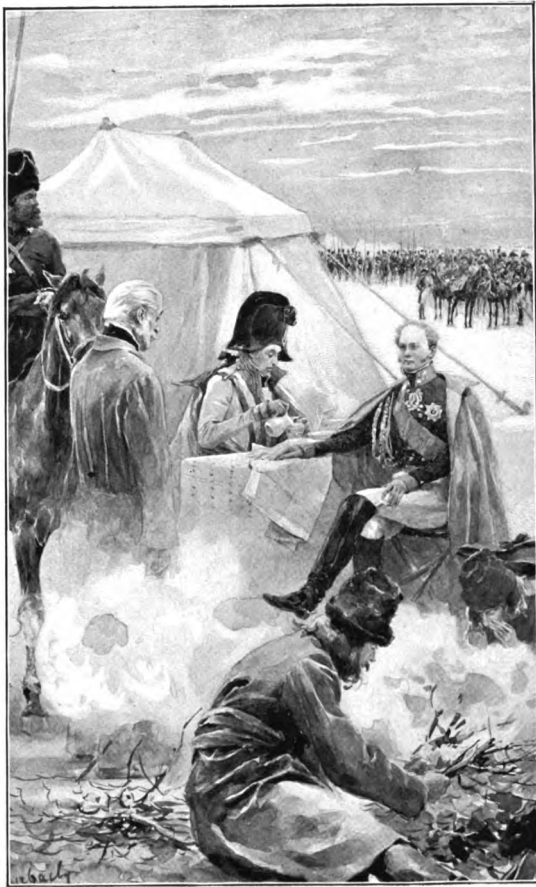
read Thiers' *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, which is more than I have been able to do. You have studied the course the action took eighty-five years ago, and should be able to guard us against a repetition of our blunders. It is not paying you an extravagant compliment to say that you are worth more to me than any of my generals, and that I hold you responsible for Austerlitz.'

'*Ach, heilige Maria!*' murmured Kaiser Franz, raising his hand to his thick lips, 'verily these eggs are hot.'

At the words 'responsible for Austerlitz,' Captain Blythe realised the weird nature of his position. He understood, as never before, that, in principle, the sleeping intelligence is responsible; for who shall say that the mind which consents to wilful wrong, albeit in the fiction of a dream, sustains no moral blemish? He perceived that the dreamland to which he had passed was a reality, and felt himself under the control of a ghostly influence he could neither shake off nor resist. He was conscious that the scene before him was no more an hallucination than any of the seeming realities of life which vanish at a touch or fade like melting dreams. And for the moment he was appalled at the thought of what might befall him in a trance where the actual pressed so closely upon the visionary, and where the sleeper was answerable to forces and figures apparently as real as himself. He would fain have declined the weighty honour thrust upon him; but the watchful Cossack whispered—

'Tush, fool! Think you to bandy reasons with a Czar?'

Thus tersely admonished, Captain Blythe made



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desperate efforts to recall the details of the narrative he had so lately read—to fix the blunders of the fateful battle, the confusion of conflicting orders, the loss of the heights of Pratzen, the catastrophe on the frozen lakes. In the midst of this mental struggle, the Czar buckled on his sword and rode away to where his generals waited ; and poor Blythe was left to the maunderings of the Austrian Emperor about his pretty battalions, with their immaculate coats rendered yellow by exposure,—‘What would the Viennese say if they could see them now? would they laugh or swear?’

The steady tramp of marching troops was heard, and the blare of drums and trumpets drew near. The Captain beheld a regiment of Austrian *Kaiserlichs* thronging to the front, with great brass-plated conical shakos, and close-fitting coats, and skin-tight trousers that gave them a wasp-like appearance. At their head went a band that filled the air with passionate refrains, stirring the heart with the fire of brave deeds. In his sleep the old man’s pulse kindled rapturously, and his face flushed with joy, for the proud air seemed a familiar strain he had sought all his life—to find it at last in the enchantment of a dream. Past him they went—the horns, the cornets, the fifes, the drums, the clashing cymbals—their music filled with martial triumph and touched with the thrilling sweetness of Tyrolean echoes, till, as the march died in the distance, there arose a Babel of commands: Austrian officers speaking German to Hungarian troops; cavalry shouting in Polish to Croat infantry; Italians, Bohemians, Gallicians, Illyrians, side by side, each using their native dialect, to which Russian officers, galloping about, added

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the bewilderment of a language intelligible to few but themselves.

Before him extended a marvellous panorama. Immediately in front rose the heights of Pratzen, covered with cannon and infantry; to the right and left stretched long lines of troops, the green Russian uniforms contrasting with the Austrian white. Farther away were Hungarian hussars, in dolmans and colbacks and braided breeches, suggestive of fancy dress; and behind them followed the ubiquitous Cossacks with their shaggy horses and long lances. In the wintry stillness of the Moravian fields, between the assembled armies, rose straight lines of poplars, standing like sentinels between the gathering hosts; and above them came the flush of day and the radiant splendour of the sun of Austerlitz. The smoke of an expiring camp-fire floated lazily across the turquoise-tinted sky, and the snow-crested hill-tops glistened as though touched by an aureole. All sounds were hushed now, and a marvellous quiet prevailed, that, to the dreamer, was intensified by the thought of the storm about to burst. The instant seemed to him one of unspeakable repose, as though the calm of Nature, like a perfect benediction, had overspread and silenced the passions of Man. The sunrise was one of more than earthly beauty, with such effulgence of transcendent beams, such opalescent hues across the heavens, that the Captain in his bewilderment, with thoughts of Christmas still fresh in his mind, fancied something of the mystical light of Bethlehem must lie behind that brilliant Orient, to touch the earth with such incomparable glory.

The Czar was gesticulating excitedly to his generals, and the Austrian Emperor had finished his



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ham and eggs, when from the mist in the ravine beneath Pratzen emerged the French infantry and artillery, with glittering squadrons on the flanks. As the fusilade commenced, the Czar motioned Captain Blythe to him. 'You perceive,' he said, 'the solemnity of this hour. Every form you behold is a spectre—the semblance of its former self. The Fates granted that when the last of those who fought at Austerlitz had died, the field should be fought over by their ghosts. The last of them, a Russian drummer, aged fifteen in December 1805, joined us this morning. All now are here: the men, the vivandières, the horses—even the dogs with their little waggons that draw the big drums in the Austrian bands. For sixty-five years I have watched them gather; and you who live on earth, and have the anguish to see your loved ones taken from you, know not the joy that spirits feel as, in our place of waiting, our comrades reappear and greet us as of old.'

And, as he spoke, Blythe noticed hundreds of great birds, crows and vultures they seemed, flying at a distance, and wondered if these, too, were spectres. Then the Czar touched him on the shoulder and added, 'Remember your duty: follow near, and keep me from the faults and failures of the flesh!'

The battle had commenced, and the first mistake of 1805 had already repeated itself with a strange fatality: through a misunderstanding of orders, a division of Russian cavalry had taken position on the heights of Pratzen, thus causing a delay in the advance of the second infantry line. It seemed as though the force of destiny could make itself felt

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even in the land of dreams. The Czar turned upon Blythe with a reproachful look : ' Could not you,' he cried, ' have saved us the repetition of that folly ?'

The French advanced rapidly, and at sight of his battalions recoiling before their impetuous onset the Czar's face darkened under a sinister presentiment. Nevertheless Miloradovitch, who commanded the Allied centre, exposed himself with daring courage at the front of the division bearing his name, while approaching from behind could be seen the Russian guard, which, by a further repetition of error, had been stationed too far to the rear to be immediately available. At its head rode the Cuirassier Life Guards, the *élite* of the Muscovite army, resplendent in steel and brass, with floating plumes and long straight swords. This corps instantly fell upon one of Vandamme's regiments, which it crushed before the very eyes of Napoleon, capturing its faded and tattered tricolour flag, the emblem of the conquering revolution. This its captor carried back to the two Emperors, with personal triumph undiminished by a bayonet gash through his face, from which the blood trickled slowly down upon the sparkling decoration at his breast. Captain Blythe looked on with breathless interest, for never had he beheld so splendid an onset ; and, moreover, he vaguely remembered reading, years ago it seemed, in Thiers' pages, of this charge and capture of a flag. The Czar smiled and spoke to the wounded soldier ; and the Austrian Emperor, with a sour grimace, remarked, like the philosopher he was, ' What shabby standards these Frenchmen bear !'

The battle had become engaged as far as the eye could reach, and as the fire grew hotter and the



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cannon-balls whizzed through the air or ploughed the ground, Blythe wondered that none of their group of brilliant staff-officers had been struck. But now—simultaneously with a sharp crackling of the fire in his room—a violent explosion rent the air, and an Austrian general near by fell from his horse face downwards. The Czar beckoned Captain Blythe to his side. 'You are mismanaging this!' he exclaimed: 'these occurrences are merely a renewal of what happened, and if you do not have a care, the result will be no better. Already I see you have allowed Buxhoevden, on the left yonder, to mire his troops on ground Thiers must have told you proved untraversable. Look for yourself, and see that his artillery is imbedded to the axles.'

The Englishman saw, indeed, not only that the Allied left was upon dangerous ground, but that a portion of the French centre, wheeling to the right, was marching to strike it in flank. Swiftly he beheld the dire catastrophe that followed,—the Russian infantry, shattered and driven upon the frozen lakes, the storm of cannon-balls that rent the ice, the struggling and drowning soldiers, the abandonment of artillery, the flight of the survivors. And now the Allied centre, violently assailed by Soult, gave way. The Austrian soldiers, casting aside their heavy muskets and brass-plated shakos, fled bare-headed and weaponless. Whole batteries of curiously fashioned cannon that had been drawn from Moscow, a thousand miles, were deserted; half a dozen of the gaudy flags of both armies, emblazoned with ravenous, open-mouthed eagles, lay on the ground, in apt token of the woeful fall of those imperial birds, while about them were dead or wounded

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soldiers, the Austrians in their white, blood-stained coats presenting a ghastly appearance.

Captain Blythe was recalled from the fugitives by a menacing gesture. It was the Czar, his broad face flushed with anger, his lips trembling as though with muttered imprecations. He motioned to some of his infantry who lingered, and pointed fiercely at the Englishman, and in that gesture was a sentence of death. Half a dozen men formed in line, and the Cossack, whose features were those of Arabella's husband, charged now with Satanic malignity, gave the word of command. Captain Blythe felt that he was not dreaming; he had drifted from dreamland into the realm of spirits—about to become, for him, the realm of death. The scene before him and the events that he had witnessed were not visionary. There was the sun in the sky, and yonder the leafless December branches. He stamped on the snow, and the crisp crystal grains flew from under his foot. The inanimate objects, as well as the men before him, were as real as himself. He watched the motions of the soldiers with the resignation of a brave man. Every detail of their equipment was distinct—their dingy uniforms frayed after two months' campaigning, their leather shakos with long *ponpons*, their clumsy flintlocks and iron bayonets of a previous reign. He heard the brief order, saw the men tear the paper cartridges with their teeth and ram them home. Then followed the click of the ramrods striking upon the bullets that were to tear his body. In that supreme instant he had neither heroic thoughts nor useless regrets; it merely seemed infinitely sad to fancy this beautiful earth without him—this earth where in the focus of his own small



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sphere he seemed to have filled so important a place, yet whence his removal would not even be noticed.

His heart throbbed violently. Ready! Aim! The flintlocks glittered in the sun; there was a loud report; his heart quivered and stood still; and Captain Blythe lay dying in his armchair before his Christmas fireside.

The door had been opened by a valet, who came to remind him of the hour—dinner would be served at seven, and it was time to dress. The words faltered on his lips as he perceived that his master was unconscious. In a few moments a physician had been summoned, and soon after arrived the poet who had been bidden to his friend's Christmas dinner, and who seated himself at the side of what was to prove Captain Blythe's deathbed. For an hour the sufferer remained speechless, and when at last his lips moved, his words were so strange that those about him listened in silent wonder to the reiteration:—

‘Responsible for Austerlitz! And shot to death!’

Nor could he be wholly recalled from the phantom land to which he believed that he had wandered, and where he declared he had met his fate. With slow and difficult utterance, that at times sank to a whisper, he told the story of his ghostly adventure.

‘But, my dear fellow,’ said the poet, soothingly, observing that the extraordinary recital agitated him, ‘you are safe in your own room, which you have not left for an instant.’

‘Not left in body,’ replied the dying man; ‘but in spirit I have been far from here, and those I met have done me a mortal hurt. Believe me, the song

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of the "Erlkönig" is founded upon a truth, and the boy's life was charmed from him as he listened.'

The doctor applied restoratives, and watched attentively. 'It is an aneurism of the heart,' he mused within himself.

Then the ill man turned, as if, with faculties supernaturally keen, he had divined the thought :—

'No,' he ejaculated : 'It is the Russian bullets.'

And nothing could dispel this weird hallucination. He believed that at the cost of life he had touched one of the secrets of occult science, and, until final unconsciousness, his mind was persistently running upon the ghostly bourne into which he had strayed, and whither his spirit was about to return. But his vision gradually assumed a softer aspect, and from the words he muttered it appeared that the scene before him had changed to one of matchless beauty, where stretched a winding river with sunlit castles and vineyards, rich with the radiance of a transfigured morning. And beside him the Elf King whispered words of irresistible persuasion, sweet as the song of birds at break of day,—and the Elf King's phantom daughters beckoned from the night of earth towards the shining river. And when his last breath had passed, the poet, bending at the bedside, was so possessed by the mystery of his fate, that he thought of the friend whose cold hand he still clasped as of one who had fallen a victim to the spectres upon whose domain he had unwittingly trespassed.

## MONSIEUR DE NÉRON

PARIS, October 25th, 1894.

I WAS born at St. Germain in the year 1830, and therefore, even if you know no more of figures than a *Ministre des Finances*, you will see that I am sixty-four years old. I am not an infirm man, though I no longer eat champagne suppers nor frequent public balls. The trifle of interest upon my savings, added to my pension—a mere pittance, such as one might expect from these Radical times—enables me to live without care, and to allow myself a few gratifications. I drink coffee in bed every morning, as becomes an officer of the Second Empire, rise at twelve, and dine upon *la soupe* of the French soldier, followed by a Chateaubriand, or a grilled chicken, *arrosé* with a bottle of Léoville—good enough stuff to lubricate the whistle, as the frank-spoken English sailors say.

It was one afternoon, a week ago, when I had just finished dinner, that the Commissaire de Police of this Arrondissement waited upon me. I was pouring out a thimbleful of brandy and deliberating whether to go to the *matinée*, when the Commissaire followed Babette into my sitting-room unannounced. His muddy boots left a mark upon my ruby carpet, and he looked at me inquiringly, as though I were some

curious and perhaps dangerous animal. I regretfully remembered another saying that comes to us from across the Channel, that an Englishman's house is his castle, and wondered how John Bull will relish a hangtail republic like ours when he looks up across his roast beef and pint-o'-bitter-draw-it-mild to see an inspector walk into his private room, while a couple of bobbies stand staring at the door.

The Commissaire's first words informed me that a dangerous character—he used the words with startling intensity—had fallen into the hands of the police, and that a paper found in his possession made allusion to me; that I must come instantly to the Préfecture, not precisely under arrest, but for the purpose of identifying the prisoner.

‘Who is this prisoner?’ I ejaculated.

‘He passes under so many aliases that it is hard to tell his real name.’

‘But it is monstrous to connect me with the criminals you find in the byways!’

‘*Après tout,*’ rejoined the Commissaire, with an elastic shrug, ‘if Monsieur is clear of complicity, as of course he must be,’ he added, with a queer smile, ‘it will only be to inform us who this man is.’

‘You attach great importance to him, then?’

The Commissaire drew in his breath with a hissing sound without speaking.

‘So bad as that! . . . An Anarchist, perhaps?’

‘*Bédam!*’ was all the answer I received.

At the Préfecture de Police I was shown into the Préfet's private room. There were so many people crowded about the table at which he sat, that for a moment I did not distinguish which among them was

the prisoner. Then two or three men moved aside, and I saw him standing handcuffed, with a *sergeant de ville* on each side. I recognised him at once as Monsieur de Néron, a man I had met at several periods of my life. His appearance was greatly changed since I first knew him, at Rome in the early sixties. He still had the burly, athletic figure of his younger days, and the smiling look of insolent triumph; but he had grown fat and bald, his eye had lost much of its fire, and his face had acquired that indescribable yet unmistakable look that stamps the absinthe drinker. No salutation or word of recognition was exchanged. Perhaps he was thinking, as I was, of what happened between us in '71, whereof I shall presently have occasion to speak.

The Préfet asked me questions till I nearly fainted from exhaustion. After that a *Juge d'Instruction* cross-questioned me in a way which showed that the prisoner was believed to be the supreme chief of the Anarchists in France, Spain, and Italy—a sort of ultimate 'Number One,' who makes the plans and touches the button, and, pouf!—a revolution. The straightforwardness of my story soon exculpated me from any connection with him—a circumstance doubtless greatly strengthened by the failure to discover anything more suspicious among my papers than some photographs of handsome women and half a dozen love letters dating from no matter how many bright years ago. Through the long course of my interrogatory, the prisoner never proffered a word, nor made the slightest interruption, merely regarding me from time to time with his insouciant, devil-may-care look. Whatever reasons his captors had for thinking him guilty of great crimes, he appeared to

feel quite unconcerned, perhaps knowing that the fetters of justice have no more power to bind a malefactor of extraordinary force—a real *premier* in crime—than the webs spun by spiders at dawn can stop a wolf on his way to his lair. *Qui sait!* All I know is that upon presenting myself the next morning I was excused from further attendance, and soon it leaked out that Monsieur de Néron had mysteriously vanished in the night, leaving nothing behind but half a package of cigarettes. Impossible, you will say; yet we all know that things deemed impossible are continually happening. There was an *enquête* into the circumstances of his escape, and the guards who connived at it were severely punished, but that did not bring back the culprit. In the meantime my interrogatory was read over to me—a jumbled, unintelligible mass of questions and answers—and I was required to sign it as an acknowledgment of its accuracy. Before leaving the room a heedless impulse prompted me to offer to write the story of my acquaintance with Monsieur de Néron in more concise and direct form; whereat the Préfet bowed, as polite as a dancing-master, and the *huissier* showed me out. The next day, after dinner, Babette wheeled a large table to the light, laid upon it half a dozen sheets of foolscap and two artistically sharpened pencils, and I wrote the following memorandum:

I first met Monsieur de Néron at Rome in 1861. It was when the Emperor Napoleon had purchased the ruined Palace of the Cæsars of Pope Pius IX., and had commissioned the celebrated archæologist Pietro Rosa to excavate it. Those were the glorious days of old Rome, before it had been smeared with



*“Monsieur de Néron.”*





modern brick and stucco. True, one might come now and then upon a heap of offal higher than a man's head, and occasionally a throat was cut at midnight, but as the charming Romans said, *Cosa vuole!*—will not God care for His own at the last?

An uncle of mine had caused me to receive a military education; but upon his death, in 1852, I relinquished my chance of a commission, and devoted myself to a more congenial and lucrative career than the profession of arms. After some years of travel and study, I obtained a clerical appointment in connection with the researches being made by the Imperial Government amid the ruins of the Palatine Hill. One morning I was superintending the labours of a force of men, with my maps unrolled at my feet. The scene was one of such transcendent loveliness, with the violet Alban hills and the vast stretch of the green Campagna in the distance, that occasionally I strolled this way or that, to look about me and to breathe the soft Roman air, and revel in the deliciousness of the Italian sunshine. During one of these momentary absences, I observed a stranger, a young man, clean shaven, of powerful physique and commanding air, walking about contemplating the fragments that raised themselves in places above the greensward. I took him to be some visitor of distinction to whom a permit had been extended, and thinking it a pity that he should waste his time in mere idle speculation, approached him, with the remark, 'If you desire a guide, Monsieur, I will detail some one to accompany you!'

Before my sentence was finished, the stranger, who had turned to confront me, burst into an

immoderate fit of laughter. I felt so mortified at this rudeness that I was moving away, when, laying his hand upon my arm, and restraining his merriment, he said :

‘You will perhaps excuse the mirth your question excites in me when I give you some slight proof of how little I, of all others, stand in need of a guide in the Palace of the Cæsars. Listen. You and your men are at this moment, so one of them told me, in search of a portico or side entrance to the structure raised by Caligula. You are searching for it in the wrong place : it is farther back, and a hundred yards to the left !’

I was as much displeased by this suggestion as I had been at his want of civility when I addressed him. Was it not absurd, as well as impertinent, that a casual visitor should assume to know better than Signor Rosa, under whose orders I was working?

‘Nevertheless,’ I replied, ‘I am not informed upon what authority you speak ; and, as for the position of the portico, it must evidently have opened upon the Via Sacra.’

‘You are again mistaken,’ answered the stranger. ‘The Via Sacra did not pass, as you imagine, in a straight line before the Palace. When you dig it out, you will find that it bends away to the eastward.’

I looked at the man in silence. Was he mad—this babbler who knew the course of the Via Sacra, that had lain buried for centuries, and whose position the best of us could only conjecture ?

‘There is another mistake upon your map which lies unrolled yonder,’ he added, talking as though he owned the ground we stood upon. ‘The temple of Jupiter was built, not where you place it, but near

those great trees, at the head of a little street, called, in ancient times, the Clivus Palatinus.' With that he gave me a nod, and, turning away, continued his stroll.

You may be sure I did not let the matter end there. A moment later my clerk was following him from a distance, and that afternoon he reported the stranger to be *il cavaliere di Nerone*, lodging in the Via Quattro Fontane.

His words were strange enough, and left me dazed ; but, stranger still, the statements he made proved true. I remained several years in Rome, working as one of Signor Rosa's assistants. The portico was found at the spot indicated ; the Via Sacra turned eastward, as he said ; the Temple of Jupiter Stator, and even the Clivus Palatinus, revealed themselves at the point he had noted. And here I must plead guilty to having taken to myself the credit of these discoveries as the result of my own superior acumen. As soon as it appeared that the stranger was right about the portico, I announced the other facts he had communicated to me, and upon my prognostications proving correct, I became famous among antiquarians.

It goes without saying that I made inquiries concerning the Cavaliere di Nerone, which resulted in information of a nature to his discredit. Whence he came, no one knew. He had received an excellent education, and spoke French with such correctness as indicated a long residence in Paris. He was said to be indolent and gluttonous. He talked with gusto of Spanish bull-fights in which he had participated, and was known to the police for monstrous and demoniacal cruelty to animals, and,

when they fell into his power, to young children. He possessed ability of a high order, frequented the Papal Court, always had plenty of money, and was evidently 'protected,' as the Romans call it, by the highest influence. He was fond of strolling about the ruins, knowing many of them, as it were, by intuition, and speaking of a few as recalling personal memories. Some of his time must, however, have been less innocently employed, for, although but twenty-three years old, he had already incurred the scandal of having compromised and abandoned two young women.

My phenomenal success with the buried Via Sacra and the Temple of Jupiter Stator ultimately brought me to the notice of the Emperor Napoleon. I was appointed one of his staff of literary secretaries, being employed in 1866 upon technical and geographical data for his 'Vie de Jules César,' and in 1867 upon confidential matters. I do not mean to insinuate that I was more favoured or trusted than others who were engaged in similar capacities; but I was industrious, I acquired the knack of quickly deciphering the Emperor's chirography, and away from my desk, or from the presence of my Imperial master, I forgot everything of a private nature that came under my notice.

In the summer of 1867 I was ordered to Compiègne, to take my turn for a fortnight as one of his Majesty's scribes. That year, as every one knows, was the climax of the Second Empire. The Exhibition was open, and the Czar, the King of Prussia, the Sultan, and the Emperor of Austria visited Paris. All the luxury and magnificence in which the pride of life and the lust of the flesh can

steep themselves were there. To this day, when I listen to the love music of Strauss, whose waltzes were familiar novelties, I seem to behold again a semblance of that voluptuous dream. But to the Emperor—ill, harassed, haunted by forebodings—that year's cup was bitter. I had first seen him in 1857, when he was *par excellence* the man of nerve. Through almost daily contact I came to know him as the nerveless man. Ten years before, he strode upon the lines of a fixed purpose; now every step pointed towards a collapse.

On the day of my arrival at Compiègne I was surprised to see the Cavaliere di Nerone sitting after dinner upon a terrace in the midst of a brilliant group of men and women. I say surprised only in the sense that I had not expected to meet him, for Compiègne was the place to which all sorts of adventurers obtained access. The next day I heard that his name was now gallicised into 'Monsieur de Néron,' that he was still under the highest protection of the Pontifical Government, that he was the inventor of a fulminating powder of extraordinary destructiveness, with which some officers of the Bureau de l'Artillerie were experimenting. In appearance he was unchanged. There were the same athletic and burly proportions, the same thick-set neck and clean-shaven face, the same sensuous yet commanding eyes. My informant whispered further that he had left Rome two years previously on account of a defalcation in the Pontifical treasury in which he appeared to be implicated, and also that his name was connected at Compiègne with that of Mademoiselle X——, one of the beautiful girls with whom, as maids of honour, the Empress surrounded

herself. Socially he was a favourite—as is often the case when a man has a scandal jingling at his heels : it is like tying a tin pan to a dog's tail—all the other dogs run after him.

One afternoon, some days later, my work being finished, and the Emperor having left the château for a drive, so that there was no chance of my services being required, I resolved to refresh myself by a walk through the forest. I had gone some distance when, on approaching a clearing, I heard excited voices. One was the voice of a woman, pleading in words that did not reach me ; the other was that of a man—harsh, strident, producing a sound that I had never before heard the equal of. A few steps brought me to the edge of the trees, and there I halted. Thirty paces distant stood Mademoiselle X——, confronted by Monsieur de Néron. She had ceased to speak ; her face was bathed in tears, and her hands were extended in mute supplication. And he ! What a figure he was—dressed to perfection, twisting his *gants de suède* convulsively between his fingers, with red passionate face and livid eyes, and nostrils distended like an animal's ! During the instant I stood there he poured forth his words with frenzied volubility, and—think of it—this angry raving of his was *in Latin* ! Then suddenly he advanced and struck the lady a heavy slap in the face.

I sprang to the rescue, but halted at the first step. De Néron had turned upon his heel, and was striding away. Mademoiselle X—— was walking slowly towards me, with her face bent down and half-covered by a handkerchief she held to it. For the lady's sake I would have interposed a moment before ;



*"Monsieur de Nérón."*





but now, for the sake of the lady's *amour propre*, I drew back unnoticed, watching to see that she was not followed or further molested. She walked away sobbing, passing within a few yards of me, and disappeared among the trees.

I paused for some minutes, rooted to the spot where I had innocently trespassed upon a drama of grave import to at least one life. What may have been the story between these two I know not, nor at that moment did I concern myself with it. The perplexity that beset me was the fact that De Néron spoke to Mademoiselle X—— in Latin. Now, a man in a paroxysm of rage may curse and rant in the language most familiar to him, even though it be unknown to the person to whom the words are addressed. It is Nature's instinctive reversion to the mother tongue. But how could Latin be De Néron's mother tongue? Of course I shall be told that what he used was Italian, but this was not the fact. I speak Italian fluently, and am too good a Latin scholar to be mistaken. Moreover, it was Latin spoken as neither I nor any other living man had ever heard it used, with a rhythm of enunciation and a redundance of invective wholly different from the stilted aping of a dead language. Could it be that Monsieur de Néron spoke Latin in that paroxysmal frenzy because to him it was a living language, expressing things no modern and acquired tongue could phrase with equal force and fluency?

In the midst of these cogitations I noticed something lying upon the grass where they had stood, and found it to be one of De Néron's gloves. After breakfast on the morrow I led him aside. He remembered me at once, though I do not know

whether he had previously noticed me during the week I had been at Compiègne.

‘We met once in Rome,’ I began, ‘some years ago, among the ruins of the Palatine, with whose former construction you showed a miraculous knowledge.’

He smiled absently, nodded, and waited for me to continue.

‘Chance brought me yesterday in sight of a painful scene a mile from here. I was stupefied to see a man strike a lady.’

He turned upon me his large face, beneath whose olive skin the hot blood flushed. Even in that moment’s excitement I could not but admire the classic contour of his features, and thought him, as perhaps Mademoiselle X—— had thought him before me, as handsome as the sun-god whom Clytie loved.

Without another word I extended his glove, but he brushed it impatiently aside.

‘Monsieur,’ said he, ‘you can carry my glove back to the place where you found it. You were pained, you say, to see me yesterday at a moment upon which another would have forborne to intrude. I remember you only too well during the Roman days to which you refer. I rendered you then a trifling service, which you acknowledged by having me dogged to my lodgings, and by causing offensive and injurious inquiries to be circulated about me. Shall I tell you in a word what I think of your conduct?’

‘Do me the favour,’ I exclaimed, ‘to say that word in Latin, since that is the tongue in which, to judge from your performance yesterday, you express yourself with the greatest readiness.’

He winced at this thrust, and I saw a dangerous look leap to his eyes.

‘Monsieur,’ he exclaimed hotly, ‘since you presume to allude again to what happened yesterday, you will be good enough to meet me to-morrow at sunrise at that identical spot, with your seconds, when we shall finish this discussion with very few words in any language.’

On the following morning the sun had not yet reached the horizon when, at a little before seven o'clock, I and my seconds, who were officers of my acquaintance, arrived upon the now familiar ground. It was a fine, crisp, October day, the air quite still, and the motionless branches of red and gold contrasting vividly with the brilliant emerald of the grass. I was a capital swordsman in those days, having been a fencer all my life, and having previously had two affairs upon the terrain, of which modesty forbids me to speak further than to say that one turned upon the question whether macaroni should or should not be flavoured with cheese, and that the other concerned a lady's photograph which my opponent had abstracted (by mistake, of course) from her album. I therefore felt quite unconcerned, and walked briskly up and down, humming a refrain from *La Belle Hélène*, while my seconds chatted softly and puffed at their cigars. When twenty minutes had elapsed, one of them approached me ceremoniously, as one soldier approaches another who is about to risk his life.

‘I have the deep regret, mon cher,’ he began, ‘to inform you, with the concurrence of my colleague, that in our opinion it is evident that the Sieur de

Néron will not come to this rendezvous. This evasion of his is identical with what he did last year, when he failed to meet Madame Mathilde's husband.'

Almost before the speaker had finished a martial figure appeared and saluted us all with a comprehensive wave of the hand, in which he held an open letter. This gentleman was Colonel B——, one of Monsieur de Néron's seconds, and the letter was written by the Cavaliere himself at midnight, informing the Colonel that, upon reflection, it appeared beneath his dignity to cross swords with one whom he was pleased to term 'an employé,' and that he was on the point of leaving for Paris. 'A greater piece of poltroonery never came to my knowledge,' added the Colonel, 'and I trust, gentlemen, that you will do me and my colleague the justice to exonerate us from all responsibility.'

Two years and nine months later, at the beginning of August 1870, the First French Army Corps occupied the line of the Lauter; and here I, serving as one of General Douay's volunteer aides, was in camp. The army was short of officers, as of everything else, and a graduate of St. Cyr would at least do to stop a Prussian bullet. I was sitting on the grass trying to repair my garments, and thinking to myself that, from all the disheartening news that circulated, the bottom was equally out of our march to Berlin. Suddenly a figure passed before me: it was De Néron, in uniform, covered with decorations, and no more disconcerted at the sight of me than if we had never laid eyes upon one another. I rose at once, and walked straight upon him.

'Monsieur,' I exclaimed, 'when one is a coward,

one does not presume to stand in the ranks of brave men who are about to give their blood for their country.'

He regarded me fixedly, with magnificent indifference, breathing short a little from corpulency, which had gained upon him since our rencounter at Compiègne. He wore an artillery uniform, from which I inferred that his fulminating powder might have secured him a commission. He looked the very type of a fighting man—cool, resolute, imperturbable—yet I alone in all that camp knew him to be an arrant poltroon.

'Monsieur,' he replied without hesitation, 'I did not come here to bandy words or cross weapons with my brother officers. Within a few days—perhaps a few hours—we are to encounter a host of enemies. Will not that suffice your ardour? And when that moment comes,' he pursued, laying his hand theatrically upon his breast, 'I will vie with you, as becomes a *preux chevalier*, in deeds of prowess; and when the victory is ours, if ours it is to be, I will, if you still require it, meet you when and where you please.'

'That,' I exclaimed, slapping my leg contemptuously, "is what you said a couple of years ago, just before business called you in such haste from Compiègne.'

'Well,' he answered quietly, as though my taunt had passed him by, 'if we must fight, so shall it be. Curb your impatience for a day or two, and on the first battlefield we will shoot one another, à l'*Américaine*, on sight.'

De Néron was not wrong in anticipating a surfeit of fighting. Two days later, August 6th, those of us who held the village of Froeschewiller were

violently attacked. I pass by the courage, the carnage, the horror, the despair of that evil day. As I stood watching the wild gallop of the cuirassiers to their destruction, I was wounded and my horse killed by the bursting of a shell. On our side it had already become a *sauve qui peut*, and I made my way painfully to the rear, whither thousands were straggling. Presently an officer rode past me covered with dust, and grasping a broken sword: in leaping a hedge his horse fell and threw him heavily. A moment later, passing where he lay, I recognised De Néron. Much as I disliked the man, the chivalry of a French officer bade me pause beside my intended adversary, even in the midst of that awful *débauche*, and offer him such assistance as one disabled man can give another. He grasped eagerly the proffered canteen, and, having slaked his thirst, thanked me and rose with difficulty to his feet.

‘It is nothing,’ he said, as we walked away together. Then, as though speaking to himself, he added, ‘The amphitheatre never beheld a finer slaughter than the mangling and crippling and killing of those cuirassiers. By all the gods, what a sight!’

The retreat to Châlons was an arduous five days’ journey, which De Néron and I made in company with a convoy of wounded. We no longer talked of fighting: there was sure to be enough of that without duels. Moreover, the extraordinary mystery which hung about this singular man exercised a witchery over me that nothing could shake off. I am no more inquisitive than most people, yet I would have given half a year’s income to know the Cavaliere’s true story. Events proved that I had not long to wait.

On the 12th of August we sat down to dine together *tête-à-tête* in a restaurant at Châlons. It was to be our last meeting, and we had agreed to part friends. On the morrow I, with my arm in a sling, was to return to Paris for a fortnight in the hospital, while he, having recovered from his concussion, should resume his service with Ducrot's Army Corps. We were finishing a bottle of champagne at the end of dinner, by way of refreshing our lips after the two bottles of Chambertin which had flavoured our repast. For three weeks we had been living upon coarse camp fare, glad during the retreat to get a single meal a day. The wine, the rest, and our table-talk together had brought us to a stage of good-natured comradeship on the strength of which I ventured to inquire the fate of his fulminating powder.

'It is the greatest military invention of the age,' he replied, coolly wiping his lips; 'and, had the army been supplied with my long-barrelled magazine cannon, and my annihilating shells, the Prussians could not have lived within seven miles of our line of battle. *Que voulez-vous?* the models are somewhere in the Ordnance Department, and could we have hastened them by—say a few years, an equipment of artillery would have been furnished to the Armée du Rhin, compared to which the Prussian batteries and your rumbling mitrailleuses are but coffee-mills.'

'And yet you are not a professional artilleryman?'

'No; I pursue it as a profession of love.'

'A singular taste for a dilettante!'

'You might not think it so if you knew who and what I am.'

'Can you not see,' I ejaculated impatiently, 'that



I am dying to know who and what you are? You are the most weird enigma ever heard of. You know things that have been forgotten for centuries, and my flesh creeps when I clasp your hand in mine, as though it were a hand that had plucked flowers and filled wine-cups ages ago.

Monsieur de Néron listened to these extravagant words without emotion. 'I cannot tell you my story,' he answered, after a moment's hesitation: 'it is incredible, and you would no more believe it than a dozen others to whom it has been told.'

'As surely,' I rejoined, 'as the facts you told me about the position of the buried ruins on the Palatine proved true, will I believe any confidence about yourself.'

At these words Monsieur de Néron rose, paid for our dinner, and motioned me to follow. 'I cannot talk,' he explained, 'when there is any risk of being overheard. It is a fine starlight night, the streets are tolerably quiet,—walk with me half an hour, and I will recount to you a stranger story than is to be found in most fiction.'

'Do you ever,' he asked, passing his arm familiarly through mine, 'experience a sudden spasmodic consciousness that the thing you are doing, or the words you are speaking, or the thought you are thinking, have been done or spoken or thought by you in some dim, bygone epoch? Of course you do. It is a sensation experienced by almost every one, and from it was derived our first perception of the possible transmigration of souls. With me that consciousness was habitual from childhood. As soon as I began to think, I perceived that I possessed two memories, and that one of them was a recollection of things that

happened to me at some remote date, amid other scenes, and in the companionship of people I no longer met. When I was fourteen, I talked about this dual memory to a priest who came once a week to Rocca di Papa, where my mother lived; and he first laughed at my queer fancy, and presently became afraid of me. The next year I was put to school at a Jesuit seminary, and ventured, after a time, to make the same confidence to my tutor. He did not laugh, for Jesuits know that the truth, however grotesque, is never ridiculous; and, so far from being disconcerted, he gave me excellent advice. "You evidently believe," he said, "that somewhere, at some time long since past, you lived upon earth, and that the memory of that life haunts and follows and perplexes you now. Through the life you are living to-day appears to you to be woven the tissue of a life you know only in memory, but that you remember with perfect distinctness. My advice to you is to read, to study, to fill your mind with pictures of bygone times, and the semblance of many lands, and the names of a thousand illustrious men. Probe the past in every direction. If your theory is right, you should some day come upon a clue to this extraordinary dream-land. If there be nothing in it, the course of study I recommend will have made you no mean scholar."

'I took him at his word, and a month later sought him again with an open book in my hand. "Lucius Annæus Seneca," I explained, pointing to the title-page, "was the name of my tutor." "And who then the devil are *you*?" shouted the Jesuit, growing red in the face. "I have found my own name also," I replied triumphantly, "and here it is:—

'"NERO CLAUDIUS CÆSAR DRUSUS GERMANICUS.'

‘The Jesuits would have no more to do with me, but I was provided for at the Collegio Romano by an all-powerful influence that has continually made itself felt. I acquired Latin by intuition, and gave my tutors the music of half a dozen of the love songs Acte used to sing, which they developed into superb anthems. At the age of sixteen I wrote my dream-life from memory, and submitted it in the form of a prize essay, embracing newly discovered and authentic facts concerning the emperor Nero and his times. It made a profound sensation. Some of the Cardinals thought to test me. “If,” they said, “this be indeed a case of direct transmigration, you will be able to take us to the spot on the Campagna where stood the freedman’s house to which Nero fled, and where he died.” I led them forth to a place I recognised, transfigured though it is, and bade the labourers dig. Four feet below the sod they uncovered the foundations of a villa. “Now,” I said, “the atrium of this house was paved with red and yellow tiles” ; and in the débris, all broken and displaced, we found a score of the red and yellow tiles I remembered. The only thing that still puzzled me was that I do not look quite as I used to do. You shake your head? Well, I received my robust figure from my mother, who was a handsome contadina ; and, as to my father, knowing Rome as you must, you should have little difficulty in making a shrewd guess as to his identity. Little by little, in the course of my reading, the complete past became distinct. I remembered my first love, the beautiful freedwoman Acte ; I recalled the poet Lucan, the Consul Laternus, Faenius Rufus, the Prefect of the Pretorians, and Calpurnius Piso, with whom I used to sup. But I



*"Monsieur de Néron."*



sought in vain for my golden house at the foot of the Esquiline, or for the Roman Forum, where as a youth I sat administering justice, or for the gardens of Sallust, where I loved to lie in the deep shade and dream. They existed no more than did the face of Nero in the glass; for, you understand, it was my soul only that had survived, and with it my memory. All my youth I was consumed by a passionate love of that past to which my reveries by day and my visions at night reverted. I longed for the associations of that proud life, for the frenzied shouts of the populace, for the triumphant march-past of my legions, for chariot races, and the gasp of the stricken gladiator, for the lascivious songs of the dancing girls, and for the flutes of the Athenian slaves at night.'

'There was once a fire in Rome,' I dryly suggested.

'Yes, and to this day it makes me laugh to read your modern melodramatic version of it, and to find that I am guilty of something I had no more to do with than yourself.'

I had let the man run on, for he was evidently mad. 'We have wandered a bit,' I said, 'from that delight in your long-barrelled cannon and annihilating explosives concerning which we began to speak. Are these also derived from souvenirs of the Imperial Nero?'

'There is,' he answered slowly, speaking as though in mental pain, 'a wild beast in many men's natures; and why should not that evil thing, with its cruelty, its base passions, its delight in wrong, haunt a soul from one life to another? If that wild beast had been let sleep and not awakened, the story of my first life would have been different. But when once

a tiger has tasted blood, it is too late to tame him.' Then, suddenly observing that we neared the house in which I had been lodged, he disengaged his arm from mine, nodded an abrupt good-night, and was presently lost among the moving groups of people.

The siege had come to an end, and the Commune was in possession of Paris. I had served from October until January, had escaped wounds, but not the exposure and privation of the trenches. In April I lay dangerously ill of typhoid fever, from which by the middle of May I was convalescent. It was a time of such horrors as Paris had not known since la Barthélemy. I was lodged in the Rue de Rivoli, within sound of the firing that went on day and night, while the National troops broke into the city, and the Communards stood at bay,—almost within sight of the Colonne Vendôme when it fell, with the military supremacy of which it was the emblem. One evening Madame S—— whose *locataire* I was, came to my room in great agitation.

'Monsieur,' she said, bursting into tears, I appeal to you as a man and an officer for protection.'

'*Parbleu*, Madame!' I cried, 'what mean these strange words?'

'Protection, not for me, who am of an age to care for myself, but for my daughter—a child of fifteen.'

'Protection against whom?'

'Against an officer who has lodged here these two weeks.'

'And his name?'

'Le Chevalier de Néron.'

'My good woman,' I cried, beside myself with rage, weak as I was, 'have the kindness to take my

card to Monsieur de Néron, and say I beg a few words with him immediately.'

The Chevalier, whom I had by this time come to regard as my evil genius, was out at the moment, but returned an hour later to secure some papers. Upon the receipt of my message, he came bounding upstairs to my room. His greeting died unspoken upon his lips before the cold gesture with which I motioned him to a chair.

'It appears, Monsieur,' I began, in a voice which I essayed to render calm, 'that I am fated always to hear revolting things of you. One of the worst reached my ears an hour ago. We will not discuss it, any more than we will resume our consideration of that crazy tale you confided to me at Châlons. You understand very well what I mean, and I order you to leave this house on the instant, and not enter it again under pain of being shot like the hound that you are.'

He looked at me for a moment in insolent silence. 'Yes,' he said at length, 'I see what it is. You were a fool and a beggar when I first knew you,—now you are a fool and rich. You are living in good quarters here, which means money, and nothing dulls the wits so much. In that, mark you, wealth differs from power, which, when it becomes supreme, ends in madness. As to the matter to which your insinuations point, recall, if you can, that Ode of Horace beginning

*Faune, Nympharum fugientum amator,*

and you will understand. Poppeia used to recite it divinely eighteen hundred years ago. The fair nymph below, who understands and believes my



story, is none other than a Greek girl whom in that bygone age I loved beneath her native skies. Think you I would not know again the voluptuous imagination of my divine Euphrosyne, or that, wheresoever we meet, she could fail to follow me, even as a love-bird flies to its mate? But as for yourself, by Hercules, I have trifled with you too long. Hark? do you hear those explosions? I must be gone. I find here in Paris a sphere worthy of great deeds. It is I who all day long have been preparing the petroleuses. I saw Rome burn—to-night I shall see Paris in flames. But before I go, you shall receive from me the most excruciating death known to the ancients. With this bottle of petroleum I shall make of you a *feu d'artifice* similar to those I made of the early Christians—'

'Stay! . . . What's that?'

I had struggled to my feet, and pointed speechless to the window. Before us was the black line of the Tuileries, through whose casements the eager flames were leaping. He rushed astonished to the hall, where a corner window gave a wider view; and, springing after him, I closed and bolted the door.

That, Monsieur le Préfet, or reader, whoever you may be, is all I know of Monsieur de Néron. I am not astonished to hear to-day, after twenty-three years, that he is the ultimate Number One of the Renaissance that is to purge the world with dynamite. Nor does it surprise me, *Messieurs les policiers*, that he has slipped through your clumsy clutches. Have I an opinion about him, you ask? None whatever. I do not know whether he is more fool than knave,



*"Monsieur de Neron."*



or whether he is more mad than many other equally eccentric people I have met in the course of a long and adventurous life.

A point that interests me is the query what I, an old and relatively helpless man, may personally expect from De Néron. His enmity I can now depend upon ; and you, Monsieur le Préfet, intimate that he is at the head of a fraternity of Socialists that drawn up in single rank would encircle Paris. This fact alone is so conclusive a demonstration of the futility of nineteenth-century methods against Radicalism, that I shall not hesitate upon emergency to take the law into my own hands, as people say when they mean to break it. I do not know what Monsieur de Néron and his pals may be planning. Any night he or some of them may appear at my bedside to settle accounts with me in some such drastic fashion as would have delighted him in the fine old days he remembers. But this I know—that I sleep with an American revolver under my pillow, and that the American revolver is a weapon of great straightforwardness and clearness of purpose, or, as its Trans-Atlantic manufacturers would say in their expressive vernacular,—it means business every time !

# THE ROMANCE OF CLIVEDEN

RESTORED FROM THE FRAGMENTS OF A  
MANUSCRIPT

CLIVEDEN, 30th *January* 1699.

RISING betimes this morning, I, Andrew Deepegrove, fell a-musing upon bygone things, and thereby put myself in mind that this was the fatal day, now fifty yeares gone, since His Majestie died.<sup>1</sup> And being come to that time of day, when the Past is more pleasing to look back upon than is the Future, with its six feet of sod in the Graveyard to contemplate, I am minded, in spite of the gowte in my toes and the vertigo in my head, and albeit I be but an indifferent clarke—to write a note of the sights I have seen from my boyhood to this my sixty-first yeare. And if what I write prove as dull reading as the proverbial Phrase upon a Cheese Trencher, it will therein be no worse than the writing of many of my betters.

During the restless sitting of the Rump Parliament, my elders were so distraught by the fear which prevailed in London that my youth passed without my learning of a Trade; and for my infancy, I can boast little of it, seeing it was spent in the streets, except on Sundays, when I was taken to Church,

<sup>1</sup> King Charles I.

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where, the Sermon being long, and passing the understanding of a chyld, I slept, God forgive me!

My father was a Draper, which Trade came almost to a stand during the warre, wherefore we were fayne to retire from our home in Bishopsgate to a meaner house in All Hallows, Barking, where my parents continued many yeares, even to the end of their lives; for there my Mother died of the sicknesse in the yeare of the great Visitation, and, the house being burnt to the ground twelve months thereafter, in which Fate half London shared, my Father did die of a broken heart at the ruine of his fortunes in that same yeare, one thousand six hundred and sixty-six.

This day, a half-century ago, my father bestirred him earlier than his wont, and led me by the Strand, over the fields about Charing Crosse.

‘Whither go we, Dad?’ quoth I, marvelling at this long ramble.

My father poynted towards Whyte Hall, where a great Concourse of people stood agog, and whither many, like ourselves, were wending.

‘We are going,’ answered he, ‘to see that I pray God thou’lt ne’er behold again, and that is a murther done in cold blood.’

But the press was so great, notwithstanding the people had waited for howres, and the guards used them roughly ever and again, with high words and blows, and pulling off of perriwigges, that, by reason of the Ryott, we were unable to come within sight of the scaffold whereon the King, of ever blessed memorie, was to die; seeing which, we fetched a compasse towards Rosamonde’s Pond, and stood close by the house of my old Nourse, Goody Harper:

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and, it being now gone ten of the clock, we beheld His Majestie in the midst of his gaolers and guards, walking from St. James's Palace, where he had lain, to Whyte Hall, which was to be the place of his Execution. It was the first time I had ever laid Eyes upon him, and through my long life I have never forgotten him as he passed, dressed in black satin, and wearing a velvet cloak gathered about him, for the air was nipping cold, and the Thames quite frozen over. His haire hung down to his shoulders upon each side of his pale thin face, and I noticed that in his eares were pearl and gold earrings. His demeanour was composed and stately, as a King's should bee; and many groaned aloud, and cried: 'The Whyte King! God save the Whyte King!' But he noticed them not, nor heard them for the drums, which were beating, and which kept a-tattooing till the grey-headed Executioner held up his severed head,—the Levellers not daring to let him speak to the people. So he passed in an instant, with Colonel Tomlinson and Bishop Juxon, with their haire poll'd close to their skulls, walking bare-headed on either side, and after came more halberdiers and the battle flags of Naseby and Marston Moor.

He passed from my sight. But for remembrance's sake the Anniversary of the King's death has always been kept a Fast by me, eating but once, and that sparingly, of a lamprey pye, or a syllabub of eggs, or, as to-day, a jowle of salmon with cresses.

In those days it was currently believed that when the King lay in his Coffin, his severed neck being bound about with a cloath, the Protector came and gazed upon him long and earnestly; but whether

for Joy at what he had done, or for Pitty, no man knows. And yeares thereafter, passing by Whyte Hall, and seeing Cromwell's head spiked, a shapeless and scarce recognisable mass, to be rayned upon and shone upon and blown upon and jeered at, I be-thought me how men would greatly marvel could they ghesse what the Future has in store.

Now, when the Levellers had made an end of the King, they made great talk of the Equality of Man, which is tinder fitt for the Divil's tinder-box. Nevertheless, it must be owned that many were glad of His Majestie's death, because they were taught by the Rumpers that he was a Chyld of the Scarlet Woman, and their arch-enemy. And some wept for thankfulness; yet never saw I greater Joy than when that same King's son returned into England, the people calling and bawling like mad, throwing up their caps, and drinking His Majestie's health upon their knees in the streets, which weather-cock shifting puts one in mind that upon another occasion it was the voice of the people that cried, 'CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!'

It is now thirty-four yeares since I first trod the greensward of Cliefden, and walking across it now in age and solitude, my lord of Buckingham dead, and my lady of Shrewsbury gone to her accounting,<sup>1</sup> I wonder what has become of all the spruce blades and fine ladies that here sang, danced, quaffed, and cut pigeon wings the livelong day. The first time that ever I looked from yonder Terrace upon the glistening Thames, and marked its course between the lofty Cliff on this side, and the broad Meadows

<sup>1</sup> Deepegrove is mistaken: the Countess of Shrewsbury lived until 1703.



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on that, till its silver thread passes from sight miles away beneath Maidenhead Bridge, it seemed to me that never could the Eye of Man have rested upon a scene of more exquisite enchantment. We had fled to it in Midsummer 1665, my lord looking askew at hearing that the Plague was spreading apace, and that in Drury Lane and Cripple Gate were many houses with a red cross marked upon the Dore, and the awful signal, 'Lord, have mercy upon us,' writ there. And so we drew on our jack-boots and took horse and rid away as though Beelzebub had been at our heels. And I was rejoiced over head and eares to be in the sweet ayre and away from the clang of the death-cart bell, which, having once heard, beat in my fancy night and day. As for my lord of Buckingham, he was so mightily pleased that he summoned to him a certain secret Brotherhood, who were hail fellows together, and who called themselves the King's Chess Players, being in number equal to the Pieces of one Colour on a Chess Board, each one of whom carried a little gold snuff dish, the mate to all the others. The Founders thereof had in mind the simile that life bears some resemblance to a dramatick game. Further, it has been sayd that this Companie was designed by my lord's father, the first Duke of Buckingham, who was represented by the second Piece on the Board, and symbolized a species of Viceroy, the King, of course, being King Charles the First, then Prince of Wales. Hence came he to be called the Whyte King, though those who so called him knew not its meaning. As to the Purposes which united them, their Cardinal Vertues were to abide by the King, come weal or woe, and to share one another's quarrels. More than this, they had

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pastimes, such as to excell in arms, and notably in the practice of fence, to which end the most accomplished Swordsmen were brought from Spain and France to expound the mysterie of their school. But others have it that those fencers were but counterfeits, and were really masters of the Black Art. Whereof I know only that at Cliefden the Chess Players gave much of their time to feasting and roustering, with all manner of droll merth and catches, dancing the Barley Break with a bevy of merrie wenches upon a piece of ground my master made me mark off upon the Terrace, the centre part whereof was 'Hell.' And it was enough to make the glummost Rumper smile to see them dancing in couples, scampering this way and that with peals of laughter, only those pursued being free to break hands—whence its name—and those that at the end are left in the middle are said to be 'in Hell.' And more than once, after supper, they would wax mighty merrie, the men smuttering one another with candle grease and soot, till most of them looked like divels. After which the fine ladies, being mischievous as monkeys, dressed themselves as boys, and the gentlemen as women, and so danced jigs, all in a pelting heat, till morning. Withal drank they so many healths to the King, I wondered they could tell which from t'other; nevertheless, even when the men were somewhat fuddled in a frolique, their words and carriage showed much of a gentleman, by which token you may always know people of quality.

One night, some months thereafter, supper being finished and the Chess Players and their ladies busy playing at pulling off Mrs. Bride's and Mr. Bridegroom's ribbons, we heard the bells ring out of tune,

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and one came with a mad stir, saying tydings were spread of a great fyre broke out in London ; and, looking eastward from the house top, we saw the horizon aglow with a crimson light that flushed and paled and seemed streaked with tongues of flame ever falling and rising. Then the merth ceased, and, as we stood looking, awestruck, I bethought me of the Reverend Smite-them-again Proudfit's notable discourse upon Gomorrah, with the streams of molten fyre descending, described as lifelike as if he himself had been in the midst thereof. And often since then divers have told me that the burning of London was a plot hatched by the Quakers, though it is hard to believe all the hellish designs laid at their Dore.

And now, albeit 'tis said the Brotherhood of Chess Players still continues with a new King and new men intriguing as of old with politics and women, and much poring over Astrologick divinations, yet come they here no more to dance the Barley Break. The house is entrusted to me, who am the Steward of the new owner since my lord's death ; and with me live my daughter Maudlyn, and my grandson, little merrie Andrew, and now and again her ne'er-do-weel husband, Dick Feathergay. 'Tis a marvel how a woman will value a man, if he be but an idle coxcomb, with his hat cocked behind. Ten yeares have gone since first he chanced this way with his swagger, and his yarns of sea fights and cut-throat rencounters, and his pouch full of ducatoons, though he never made any bones at drinking a draught of mulled sack with me in the buttry. But the mayds were quite daft about him, and my Maudlyn would have run off with the rascall, had not I yielded for decency's sake. And what troubles me most about Feathergay is the



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outlandish things he learns the boy, bidding him cry, 'Codsounds!' or 'Oddsfish!' putting a reed in his little hand, and showing him the poynts of single-stick and cutlass, and giving that eight-year-old Jack-a-napes half pence to come and shock me with some ribald song about black flags, and red-nosed jades, and the Spanish Silver Fleet. Here's one he's been chirping about the house this twelve-month :—

When with Captain Brand I sayled, the black flag up he nayled,  
Singing fol, fol-de-rol, de-rol, de-ri-do ;  
And we wrote it in the logge, we'd have double drams of grogge,  
Singing fol, fol-de-rol, de-rol, de-ri-do.

Far across the Sea we flew, from the Indys to Peru,  
Singing fol, fol-de-rol, de-rol, de-ri-do :  
And the Dutchman dropped his gun, and the Frenchman turned  
to run,  
When they heard us shouting, fol, fol-de-ri-do.

I remember, now I'm old, how I filled my purse with gold,  
While the Spanish Dons shrieked—oh, fol-de-ri-do ;  
I remember how we danced, while we held the girles entranced  
With the musique of our fol, fol-de-ri-do.

Which the same ungodly song, with its savour of sea-rats and gibbets, and the doubloons and pieces-of-eight whereof Dick Feathergay still has a bagfull, do make me fear that he came by his money scarce honestly.

In this midwinter season the countrie has beauties as delectable in their way as those of Summer. The difference is, that beneath the grey skies of December Nature strikes her minstrelsie in minor chords. To me, 'tis the delight of my remaining days to study the sights and sownds of Field and Forest. I love, in the quiet twilight, to hear the far-off cawing of

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crows, and to note the hoar-frost decking the tall poplars with whyte embroidery, and to gaze from the dim isles of our yew trees upon the soft meadows across the river, whose grasse was moistened many yeares ago with the blood of a troop of Roundheads, whom, through the mercy of God, our people cutt wholly in pieces. And, wherever I go, the familiar places where my lord and my lady strayed remind me of them, and continue their shadowy presence after they themselves have passed away. And of them both and of their erring love but one thing remains—the shrivelled leaves of a rose at the bottom of a coiled Venice glasse, where I have preserved it. That fragment, at the time whereof I write, was a whyte rose which my lord plucked and gave to my lady, and which she pressed to her lips and thrust in her bodice. And I myself beheld that whyte rose blush and instantly turn crimson at the touch of the Wanton's bosom.

LADY DAY, 1699.

Early in January in the yeare 1668 my lord of Buckingham brought me a slender Italian rapier, which was his favourite blade, bidding me make the poynt thereof as fine as a Valenciennes needle, whereat I smelt the business and knew there would presently be bloodshed. So when I returned it to him whetted keener than the sting of conscience, he gave me his commands for a duell to which he had been challenged by my lord of Shrewsbury, who, after some high words, both being cruell wroth and having long been at dagger's poynts, had flung down the gauntlett because my lord's dalliance with my lady of Shrewsbury was town talk. Accordingly

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at eight of the clock on the morning of January 17, after we had eaten a stoup of bread, I wended with two waiting men and a couple of grooms, with horses, to a Close neere Barne Elmes, where was the trysting place. Not long after arrived the opposite party, eleven in number : namely, my lord of Shrewsbury, with his beard turned up in the Spanish fashion, Sir John Talbot, and one Bernard Howard, with their attendants and two Chirurgeons. Having dismounted, they busied themselves very leisurely, making ready for this unprofitable jobb, and from some words let fall I gathered they feared the duell might yet be hindered by the King, who had known of it for a week. But afterward it was sayd that the King depended on the Duke of Albemarle to lay them by the heels, whilst the Duke looked to the King to clap them into the Towre ; so betwixt them the business fell between two stools. Last came my master, and with him Sir Robert Holmes and Captain William Jenkins, both Pawns of the King's Chess-Players, and well known to me as of those that footed it so merrilie at Cliefden when the Black Plague raged in London. Then perceived I that the seconds as well as the principals on either side were to cross Swords, so that it should be a *mêlée* befitting the quarrel. And my lord of Buckingham gave his horse to a page to hold, which attended close upon him, wrapped in a camlet cloak with a light blue feather in his cap. Both parties having now made ready, laying aside wigges and coats, advanced mighty briske upon one another, stripped to their shirts and breeches, and saluting, made a Congee with their naked Swords. Then my lord of Buckingham took place over against my lord



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of Shrewsbury, and Sir Robert Holmes faced Sir John Talbot, and Captain William Jenkins before Bernard Howard, the rest of us standing a little apart, and none watching so wistfully as the page which held my master's horse and which ne'er took his Eyes off my lords of Shrewsbury and Buckingham. And I perceived that the first held himself after the French fashion with Swordarm shortened, whilst the other held his arm wellnigh as straight extended as the blade I had whetted for him, which is called the Italian School, and which my Buccaneering son-in-law Dick Feathergay says is the more deadly. Then, when the six had crossed rapiers, and were ready to fall by the eares, they essayed many dexterous feints and passes, moving hither and thither, until Sir John lett fall his Sword, his right arm being torn open from the wrist nearly to the elbow. And whilst some helped him away to where the Chirurgeons stood with their bands and tourniquets, I heard the deepe gasp of one mortally hurt, and behold it was my lord of Shrewsbury who was run through the bodye from the right breast to the left shoulder. At sight whereof the page with the light blue feather smote his hands like one out of himself for Joy, at which I greatly marvelled, thinking him the most rake-shamed rogue that ever I beheld, thus to forget his place. And my lord of Shrewsbury received his hurt like a valiant soldier, or as I have seen a hart meet his death-wound, that turns upon the hunters, and gazing fixedly upon them, moves no more. Nevertheless gave he not up the ghost immediately, for the Chirurgeons were able to prolong his anguish an entire month. And as his attendants carried him away, Captain Jenkins, of



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our side, a redoutable duellist, who among the Chess-Players was called the King's Pawn, fell forward on his face pinked straight to the heart. Whom I caught in my arms and raised all bleeding, but he bore not his hurt so bravely as my lord of Shrewsbury, but with trembling lips whispered : ' Oh God, have mercy on my soul ! ' So before the Chirurgeons could lay hands on him he was dead. And whilst I bent over him, some scurvy knave, under guise of helping me, did rifle my pocket of two guinnys, which, when I discovered it an howre later, made me ready to burst with anger. So these losses giving pause to both sides, and Honour being satisfied, and it being shewn to the admiration of these fighting days that these were no Carpet Knights, we took horse and rode away, the page, booted and spurred under his camlet cloak, riding beside my master. So when we were come to Brentford I perceived that counterfeit page to be my lady of Shrewsbury, whom I had lain eyes on but once before. Anon, looking more closely at her dainty face with its flaxen hair and keen blue eyes and roguish lips and her shapely form, which seemed that of a thoroughbred of highflying spirit, I thought her, as the saying goes, as pretty as a Lancashire witch, and marvelled not that my lord's love made him ever greedy to be with her. And there my lord drank a deepe draught of buttered ale, and he and my lady took coach together, whilst I galloped on before and had dinner ready at Colnbrook, at the Chequers inne against their coming,—a cold turkey-pye, a neat's tongue, together with a sack posset. So after my lord had washed himself clean of some staynes of my lord of Shrewsbury's blood, that did

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bespatter him, and when my lady had exchanged her page's habit for one of her own flowered tabby Gowns, they feasted together with great content, it being now high day. And whilst the horses were bayted, I beheld them walking in the Garden, and my lord chucked my lady under the chin and gave her a fayre posey. When two of the clock drew neere we sped again, the servants riding armed before and behind because of the dogges, and more for fear of the rogues by the way; but at Slough Crosse Roads we were comforted by the sight of a pair of highwaymen hung in chains that had dangled a month, till at last, as the sun was sinking behind Cookham Dean Common, we drew up before the Dore of Cliefden, where all was alight and astir to receive us. Though no sooner were we come than it fell a-raying and thundering and lightening, and for an howre the storm was furious as that which raged at the death of the Protector.

The next morning, it being my lady's first day at Cliefden, my lord took her by the hand lover-wise, showing her about the Garden, the Aviary, the Labyrinth, and down the Yew walk through the woods by the river; and in the afternoon the golden Barge was made ready, with six blackamore rowers, to speede them up the river beyond Hedsor and down past Monkey Island. Yet one romantique coygne there was beside the Terrace, where stood a rustic Bench flanked with lofty over-leaning pines, wherein my lady specially delighted, and where, as the Springtime drew on she returned daily, as to a summer Parlour, to sitt a-touching of her lute, never wearying of the prospect, with its sheep fields dimming in the distance towards the

faynt blue hills, and two hundred feet sheer below her, the sparcling river. And for her constantly returning thither, with such glut of content, that place was named by the countryfolk, *the Wanton's Bowre*, which name clings to it even to this day. Through all which joyous season my lord was constantly giving some farthingale or trillibut to my lady to please her—an Oriental patch box, or a Florentine casting bottle, filled with rare perfume, and once a pair of garters with diamond buckles for her Valentine, or, again, a marmoset that chattered like a noisy brat. Moreover, lute players brought he, that fingered their instruments so cunningly that their musique filled the Eyes with tears to listen, yet their playing seemed easy as cracking nutts. So at twilight, in pleasant weather, they were wont to sitt together on the Terrace, sipping tea, within hearing of the murmur of the river bubbling and eddying at the Weir hard by, whilst the lute players filled the air with such an ecstasy, that one afternoon my lady suddenly burst into a flood of tears.

For a pastime went they often a-gadding on horseback, my lady mounted on a little hacquenee, through the glades of Burnham Beeches (you may see to this day where my lord did cutt his own and my lady's letters), and followed the falcon for miles across the Common. And once made I ready for them a feast beside the ruine of Medmenham Abbey, in the midst of the Cloyster,—pullets, a lark pie, prawns, anchovies and cheese; and all would have gone well, had not the Venison Pasty, which I had bespoke at the Rayne-Deere Inn at Marlow, been palpable mutton, which was a most fowle, unhandsome trick. Nevertheless, despite this misadventure, they

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fell abroad the victuals and regaled themselves right merrilie, tarrying long while the minstrels played; and I well remember my lady's ringing laughter at my lord's jests upon the fat, jovial fryers, and how that day she wore her haire frized short up to her eares. And I bethink me now of that fayre day, and of their glad voices which now are still.

On St. Valentine's Day made I ready an extraordinary dinner for them at two of the clock, and twenty was the number that satt at table. And it was ordered to be a tasting dinner, which means that everything should be of the best. By way of relish, to give the men their thirst, was a barrel of oysters, with salted anchovies and old ale; after that, pease porridge, dressed lobsters, with French and Rhenish wines, and a fricassee of pullets, followed by marrow bones; and lastly, three legs of mutton roasted on a single spit, one cook turning and another basting. Whereat the freakes and froliques waxed fast and furious, and when the Spanish Olio was sett on table with no stint of sack, the Chess-Players swore with many humourous oathes they would nowise suffer themselves to be poysoned, therefore rubbed they the lacquies noses with bits of bread dipped in gravy, in merrie semblance of the antient tasting by them which served. Seeing which my daughter Maudlyn, then a brat of seven yeares, watching these mimique trickes from the head of the stayrecase, did lose her hold for very merth, and slid from the top to the bottom, whereat the ladies laughed so heartily that it did one good to heere them. So with cheese and sweetmeats and mincepyes and brandy the repast ended. Then brought they in a great dogge which played many droll conceits, and which was professed to discover

which one of a companie most loved a pretty wench in a corner. And what did the foolish beaste but come up to me where I stood as Steward and Carver, and wagge his bushy tayle, whereat they laughed till I thought they would rattle them out of their wits. But I felt like a doating fool, and as for that ugly cur, they fed him till the gravy ran about his chops. After which they fell to playing a fanfaroon game, lately imported from abroad, the ladies flinging cushions at the men, and being kissed in return by whomsoever they touched, which I did think a tipsy kind of silly business. And this friskeing they continued till past candlelight, and anon it began to rayne, and they called for more wine and grilled bones, and a wet evening it was, both within and without.

MIDSUMMER DAY, 1699.

This day came my she-cozen, in her patcht grey coat, to see me, she that stood gossip to little Andrew at his Christening—a troublesome Carrion as breathes—yet a cunning piece withal. And we had a hog's hasslet and some bread-and-cheese to dinner, to which she made herself free, taking occasion of my having given little Andrew a Jack-a-napes coat with silver buttons to beg the price of a pair of silver buckles for her shoes. So, notwithstanding I and her sorry little husband are none the best of friends, since he tooke offence at hearing I sayd his red nose made me ashamed to be seen with him, I did give her an angell,<sup>1</sup> and bade Maudlyn dress the remains of a capon and give it her to take home.

<sup>1</sup> Ten shillings.



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Despite which, I could not but wish she had continued, as formerly, to live at Hogsden<sup>1</sup> until the feend put it into her to quit the neighbourhood of London and, for my Sinnes, come here to live at Maydenhead. And when first they came, her husband, who is an officious poor man as any Spaniel, became not a little puff'd up, and begged us to dinner to meet the Village Parson, and albeit 'twas but a sluttish dinner, he took as much state on him as if he had been born a lord ; but the yeare after his Pride had a fall when he was caught poaching in Windsor Park and was soundly basted by the Keepers. Yet this did not mend his wasteful ways, and I thought to myself, He that will not stoop for a Pin will ne'er be worth a Pound. And after his idle hands had brought him within sight of Beggary, I'll be hanged if the spendthrift had not the impudence to write me a Discourse upon the Way to become Rich, in the same breath that he asked me for the loan of five-and-twenty guinnys.

It is now the season of Apple blossoms and red Clover Patches ; of daintilie clustering vines and sky-swung blossoms ; of long mellow days when hawthorn and wild violets scent the ayre and the birds begin to fill the woods with song. And it marvels me to remember that my lord and my lady should have pitched upon this, the sweetest time of the yeare, to quarrel.

One May morning, that she had been out at Dawn, attended by her mayds, to bathe her face with May-dew on the Terrace, I was awaiting her return, as usual, with a cup of lamb's wool,<sup>2</sup> which,

<sup>1</sup> Hoxton.

<sup>2</sup> Ale, sugar, nutmeg, and the pulp of roasted apples.

after such an errand, she quaffed with Joy. And it struck a damp in me to see how pale and sad she looked ; and, upon my asking if she felt aught amiss, she smiled upon me kindly-wise and answered, ‘ Nay, good Deepegrove, naught that thou canst mend.’ That day—it being Washing Day—I dined upon cold meat in the buttery, and one of her mayds, the comeliest sweetheart of the twayn, dined with me. And when we had finished, I took her plump hands in mine and kissed her, for that it always makes me troubled to see a buxome wench downcast. So sitting thus pleasantly, cheek by jowle, whilst I toyed with the braid of her laced wiske,<sup>1</sup> she told me how my lord and my lady were at loggerheads ; for that my lady could not abide the Chess-Players which distracted him from her, nor his studies in the Black Art, which she said had done more credit to a Potticary than to the Duke of Buckingham. To neither of which charges could I honestly make answer, for my master was continually deepe in Schemes wherein two or three of the Chess-Players kept running between Cliefden and London ; and, as to the second accusation, I doubt not my lord was as subtle an Alchemist as any in the land, for he had an elaboratory with chymical glasses and calculating table, and divining rods, and musty books, and other such Divel’s tools. Where-withal to such a degree of perfection had he brought his Incantations, that one afternoon we heard a crash, and the house was filled with a vile, combustible odour, and my lord lay stretched half silly. Being, therefore, unable to gainsay the mayd’s words further than that lovers’ quarrels are sure sign of a mad

<sup>1</sup> Bodice.

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world, I sought to lighten her sorrow with kisses and mulled wine.

That very evening at supper it was clear my lady's nose was somewhat out of joynt, for I found my lord not a little sowre, and their table talk was but making bread of stones. Howbeit for some days I thought their difference upon the mending hand, but she had such a peevish lust of powre over him, that, as the saying is, my lord was not able so much as to whip a catt, but my lady must be at the taylor of it. Moreover, knowing him to be a man of many honeymoons, she was jealous of him almost to madnesse. So when those arch-fellows, the Chess-Players, came again, she seemed full heavy hearted and left her Espinette and watched from her casement, as though she had been loth to see him go to saunter with them for howres up and down the long green walk. And that afternoon when I brought tea, I came full upon them by the eares. Perhaps my lord's soft rebukes angered my lady the more for that she saw in them a token that he had begun to tire of her. But when I opened the Dore they did speak very high, she carping at him and ripping up of old Sores and casting them in his Teeth. Then in the midst spoke he up and said, 'Don't play the fool, girle,' cried he, and his eyes did candle, whereupon she gave him a smart box of the Ear, and my lord turned without a word and left the room in silence. But my lady covered her fayre face with her hands, and I bethought me of the trite saying that nothing in life is more dry than love grown stale. And my lady fell in a swound so that her sweet bodye lay upon the floor, till I fetched a bundle of myrrh for her to smell on,

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which did stay her faynting. Yet softly in the night, whilst the whole house slept, my lady summoned her mayds and a brace of varlets and her coach, and lo! before the cock-crowing she was gone. So their honeymoon was ended, and my lord of Shrewsbury at rest in his grave.

I have often been ask't whether my lord's Alchemick and Astrologick studies may have had aught to do with the ghost that walks the great avenue at Whyte Lodge acrossse the river, and I have always honestly answered, No. In the first place, that ghost was the talk of the country folk when my lord was a babby; and, moreover, I have ne'er seen it myself, and doubt if it exist at all, even be the night as dark as Pitch. The only one dares tell me soberly to my face that he hath seen it is my heathenish son-in-law, Dick Feathergay, who put me into a stound one frosty, windy night, a yeare ago last Candlemas, as we satt together in the buttery over a lusty cup of wine and game of cribbage, by telling me that one evening at dusk, passing that way without a lanthorn, he heard the ban-dogge cry for fear, and felt the ayre grow suddenly chill around him, and beheld the faerie figure of a beautiful damsel in snow-whyte garbe, that came towards him, ever washing her fayre hands in a basin that floats before, wherein is the blood of her chyld. But when he made shift to speak, the apparition fell in shards, and then the ban-dogge cried no more. But Feathergay doth spin such unseemly yarns as make me mistrust he draws the long-bowe: as that Captain Brand, with whom he sayled, could pluck a red coal with his fingers from the fyre, wherewith to light his pipe; or again, being sore vexed, he did

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bite a piece the thickness of orange peel out of the blade of his cutlasse : and also that on board the ship there was a talking parrot which chatted indifferently in Dutch or French or Portuguese, the which in their dealings with strangers they were wont to employ as an interpreter. Moreover, Dick had told me of himself, amongst other feats of strength, that once, bathing in the sea and being approached by a monster Shark, he clasped it to his Bosom and squeezed the poor beast amain, till it was right glad to betake itself elsewhere. But all these things I deem to be no better than far-fetched, frivolous tales.

Often in summer, when the sunshyne do bee sweete and fayre, I betake me to the Wanton's Bowre, and rest me there awhile beneath the trayling sweetbriar, and muse on these quaint memories whereof I have somewhat written, whilst the golden howres glyde by. And even as I behold that radiant prospect now, others have gazed fondly upon it ages ago ; and in future generations men may derive from it somewhat of the Peace and Inspiration of their Life. So that, albeit old age is creeping on me apace, it is old age passed in the daily contemplation of transcendent beauty, and in the possession of delectable memories which should be an old man's choicest treasure.

In the morning I look from my casement toward the sunrising, across the cloven dene where a streamlet goes babbling. Little merrie Andrew comes tumbling into my room to tell of a rabbit he has seen dart into the hedge, or to ask what means that soft cooing that comes from the dovecote. And looking out from my lofty aerie, so far from the world of trouble and care, I listen to the thrilling song of birds, and wonder if,

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hereafter, in some other and still more glorious world, the birds shall sing to us on many a Summer's morning!

Up and down the long green walk I pace, where yeares ago the Chess-Players sauntered with their short cloaks and long swords and feathered hats and silver spurs. Across the Terrace runs little merrie Andrew and down the Yew Tree Walk, where I seem to see again my lord and my lady strolling as of yore, she with her hands full of April violets, and he with his arm cast lightly about her. So, idling to the riverside, we stop to feed the waterfowle, the young cygnets swimming proudly in midstream, whilst the drakes peck along the bank, reminding me of poor relations sitting below the salt. From there, looking across the fat grasslands of Whyte Lodge, where in the warre our people cutt to pieces an entire troop of Roundheads, a thought of their shining corselets and fierce clamour and flash of gunpowder recalls the adventure in arms of my Uncle Prudent Deepegrove, now in Paradise. My lord of Buckingham, being then a commanding youth, did raise a Companie of horse and took my father's brother to be his body servant, and girt him about with a great Sword and furnished him a horse and a pair of pistols. And the Sword was fayne to gett betwixt mine Uncle's legs when he walked, and the pistols he durst not for a long time load, he being but an imperfect man of warre. And falling in with the enemy at Nonsuch, our people were discomfited, and my Uncle in particular, though he laboured amain, could not fetch the sword out from its scabbard, the blade being rusted and fixed like a snail in his shell. Likewise snapped he his pistols; but the same being damp

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from lying at night in the moist grasse, refused their wonted service. Whereupon, my honest Uncle turned about his horse's head and made a shift for the woods, oft declaring in after yeares he would ne'er have drawn rein short of John O'Groat's or the sea had not he been halted at a narrow bridge by a little old hell-bred she-asse, which at his approach rushed from her paddock, and which neither for threats, oathes nor endearments would suffer him to passe.

And now, having made an end of my writing, and having reviewed the same, I wist well it is no better than a puppet showe that mimickes the words and deeds of life. Yett even as men cast from a sinking ship some poore scrawle in a sealed bottle to tell their Fate, so do I likewise cast my story upon the river of Time, that haply men may read it hereafter and may believe that I have written for Long Syne's sake, and that the words I have spoken are Sooth.

## THE RED DWARF OF RABENSTEIN

TOWARDS the close of the seventeenth century, when good King Lewis the Fourteenth addressed himself to the task of civilising his neighbours, he incidentally pillaged and burnt some threescore castles on the Rhine, whose ruins remain to attest the passage of his soldiery. Among them is Rabenstein, standing within distant sight of Coblentz, where the waters of the three poetic rivers of Germany, the Rhine, the Neckar, and the Mosel, are united.

It is still in fair preservation, for the quick flames left its massive stonework almost intact, and the conquerors, having made short work of its garrison and possessed themselves of everything portable, moved to other fields of action. Its roofs and rafters were consumed, but one may readily follow its ramparts and identify its halls and chambers. In the centre stands a great square keep, which local tradition names the treasure tower, chronicling with gusto the fact that it was as empty when the French burst open its innermost recesses as it is to-day. About it is an open court, heavily carpeted with greensward, whereon, through long sweet summer afternoons, the shadows lengthen and deepen in the dark. Beside this enclosure is a terrace from which the eye commands a long bend of the Rhine flowing



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past Coblenz, and over whose edge one may look two hundred feet down upon the red rocks below, which to this day, says the legend, show a crimson stain where the Countess of Rabenstein cast herself headlong at the moment when the French came swarming over the drawbridge.

One day, in the autumn of 1890, a small and misshapen man, young yet in years, but with face sharpened and weazened by experience of the bitter side of life, rang the bell which hangs beside the closed gate, and waited patiently for a couple of minutes after its shrill tinkling had died away. The summons was presently answered by a good-natured-looking peasant woman who came from under the raised portcullis in place of the corsleted warder of two centuries ago. The dwarf presented his credentials, at which the woman merely glanced, with a smile at his red hair and freckled face, as she motioned him to enter.

‘You are not unexpected,’ she said ; ‘the master sent word of your coming,—it is wise and thoughtful and like him to place here a custodian of more authority than I or Mina. Your luggage will be here presently ? Very well ; and your supper shall be ready when you please, in the pantry. We have not many rooms ; I will show you yours in the Sundial tower.’

The little man followed, limping after her with a shuffling step, and casting a glance this way and that as his guide’s chatter directed his attention. This was the refectory—a complete wreck, with foxgloves growing in place of the rushes which once strewed its floor, and nothing left to mark its former use, except the outline of a great chimney, where, probably, the savoury joints were roasted before the

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eyes of the assembled guests. Yonder a portion of the residence had been restored, wherein the *hochwohlgeboren* Herr von Flülen, a remote offspring of the Rabensteins, installed himself and his daughter on the rare occasions when they visited the ruin, which, with its adjacent vineyard, had descended to them. The very room which the Countess Isolde had occupied, and whence, perhaps, she may have fled on her way to cast herself from the terrace, had been repanelled and made habitable, so far as the present owner's light purse permitted. His daughter Gisela had chosen it partly for association's sake, and partly because she delighted in the incomparable vista which stretched from its single narrow casement towards the Mosel valley.

Arrived at his destination in the Sundial tower, the dwarf presently bestowed his slender effects about him, and that night, after a frugal supper of bread and beans, lay down to sleep with a happier and more tranquil mind than he had known for many a day. His name was Wolfgang Judassohn, and about his sinister appellation gathered the earliest and most poignant memories of his life. At school the deformity of his stature made him unequal to the sports of other children, and his morbidly sensitive nature was embittered by never-ceasing taunts and gibes. 'Had he in truth,' queried his schoolmates, 'a drop of the accursed blood of Judas in his veins? —or was he descended from them that kept the swine at Gennesaret? And might there be good ground for the Teutonic superstition that the Judassohns are possessed at times by devils, and that in the Middle Ages they intermarried with goblins?' He was very poor, and often in his heart-sick hours

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the foolish boy thought to himself that had he been born a rich man's heir the world would have had pleasanter things to say. At the age of fourteen he was confirmed in good German fashion, together with a score of lads and maidens; but even here the reproach of his name and of his deformity held the others aloof. Five years of jeering mockery had habituated him to the cruelty of his fellows: he was yet to learn, and that before the altar, the delight with which one sex can humble the other. Of the dozen girls in that year's confirmation class, not one would stand in line with a dwarf, still less near one who bore the ignominious stigma of the false disciple. This, therefore, was a period of profound import in the life of little Wolfgang, and he came thenceforth to think of girls only by the symbol of his confirmation—a pierced heart, significant to his juvenile fancy of that bitter side of life whereof he had received a foretaste.

He grew up a solitary, taciturn lad, wholly dependent upon himself, working for hours daily in his father's cobbler's shop, and reading at evening, by the kitchen firelight, the books he obtained from a working-men's reading-room. Upon his birthday, on attaining the age of seventeen, his father made him his first and last present—since he loved queer books—a second-hand German translation of the *Mort d'Arthur*. Even this gift was the subject of sarcastic pleasantry; for Wolfgang's birth having occurred on February 29th, he had till then seen only five birthdays, or, as his father phrased it, was but five years old. Even in this, thought the poor lad when leap year came, he was different from others. But the singular gift proved a solace for

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many ills, for he found in its pages a new life—a life of glamour and brilliance that instantly put out of thought the sordid shame which was all that he personally knew of this world's ways. He conned its pages again and again, growing to know, and at last to love, the characters in whom he found such stately friends, whose equal it was his joy to imagine himself. With Launcelot he wandered forth in search of knightly adventure, with Merlin he pondered occult arts; he adored Elaine as a slave may bow before the Queen, and spent long hours in conjecturing what might have been the nature of Guinevere's offence. His home, his country and his life, came to be amid those musty, faded days, tarnished with many a stain, but still flushed with the glory of old gold; and it became one of the foibles of his morbid fancy that the noisy trivialities of every day shrivel into nothingness in presence of the eloquent silence of the past.

The routine of his daily life was once illumined for an hour by a single bright spark. One mid-summer evening the cobbler took his wife and their progeny to a beer garden to hear a chorus of Tyrolese singers. There was some question whether the dwarf should be included, he looking so forlorn in public, with his big shaggy head and his bent limbs; but his sister interceded, and matters, for once, were decided in his favour. It would not have been easy for the dwarf to describe his emotions as he listened through the starlit evening to that rich, reverberant minstrelsy, thrilling from some halcyon and unimagined dreamland. He whispered to his sister that Heaven must be something like that enchanted garden; but others beside little Judassohn

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have been bewildered by the witchery of music. A poet has sketched in verse his visit to a ridge above Zermatt, overlooking a dozen glaciers, and commanding the stupendous snow-peaks that stand between Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn. He tells of the stainless snow-masses clean cut against the sky—of an occasional floating film of cloud—of the abysses plunging to violet-tinted depths—of the strain of thrilling music that from the Riffel far below swelled on the breathless air. It was early morning, and amid those sublime solitudes the dreamer's thoughts rose upon the wings of a new and faultless inspiration, illumined by the glory of the sunbeams upon those glistening crests. All that is best in life caught the reflected light of those tranquil altitudes, and seemed no less sublime than they. And still the distant refrain rose and fell. It was a performance no more ambitious than the effort of the virtuosi of a Swiss brass band, but the sound came from so remote a distance that its crudities were lost, and, to the ear of listening poesy, it whispered of the exuberant joy of life and of its undertone of tears. The potent voice was the same as that to which little Judassohn listened. The jodel echoes and the Sennerin's rippling song made his small heart throb, and spoke to him of dreamy retrospects and sweet imaginings and the amorous whisper of an infinite endearment. His eyes filled—whereat his father gruffly threatened him with various familiar pains and penalties when they should be again beneath the parental roof.

Half a dozen years later he obtained from Herr von Flülen the post of custodian of Rabenstein, at an annual stipend of one hundred thalers, two suits



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of clothes and board and lodging. He arrived, as we have seen, bringing with him all his worldly possessions, including the *Roman de la Rose*, the legends and ballads of the Rhine, and Schiller's poems. He brought, too, a set of chess, in which exercise he had made himself a proficient of more than ordinary force, and wherein he delighted as dealing with absolute intellectual forces and with combinations akin to the working of pure mathematics. In the end games of the great masters he found a similitude to the prodigious results of the battlefield, and he revived and brought into play the celebrated 'theory of groups,' which was one of the principles of Ruy Lopez.

The day following his arrival he devoted to familiarising himself with the property of which he was henceforth to be the steward. He paused a moment at midday in the courtyard beside a well of sweet water, whence he drew a measure to moisten the bread and cheese that Mina brought out to him on a platter. She lingered to discourse a little—so few gossips came to Rabenstein, and it was pleasant to see a new face, even if it were only the face of a dwarf. At that well, she informed him, a party of Cossacks had drunk in 1814, on their way across the Rhine to join Blucher; and in 1688 the French storming party had slaked their thirst where he stood. Yonder, high up on the donjon wall, she pointed to the shattered escutcheon of the Rabensteins, broken where a French soldier, for a jest, had discharged his mousqueton upon it by the light of the burning roofs. Within the gate tower were fragments of iron bars twisted out of recognition, and above them a single figure of a knight in armour, roughly hewn



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in stone, with one arm gone, and the other raised aloft, as if in horror at some remembered sights untold. On the highest of all the towers was a tuft of waving green—the fluttering feather of its bygone grandeur. ‘No one,’ said Mina, ‘ever came to visit the ruin: it was remote from the usual route of tourists, and Germans abhorred it because Herr von Flülen would not tolerate the familiar *Restauration* within the grey walls of his ancestors, and all the world knows that a German prefers a restaurant without a ruin to a ruin without a restaurant.

A month had passed when, one afternoon in May, Herr von Flülen arrived with his daughter for their semi-annual visit of a week. Wolfgang’s employer was well known to him, but the *gnädiges Fraülein* Gisela he beheld for the first time. She was a young woman of fine appearance, strong, well formed, of the florid German type; and dressed in a plain white gown, for the Flülens were not much richer, in point of ready money, than those who served them. She wore a straw hat with fluttering ribbon, and about her neck a bit of lace, which, with a quaint old ring, were her only ornaments. There was an imperious look in her hazel eyes, and when she spoke a savour of authority, as might befit one upon whom the glamour of Rabenstein had descended. To the dwarf she seemed a being from another sphere. He had read of such beautiful women—the Sirens of the Rhine, for example—but he supposed their species extinct; yet here stood one who surely must have come from that imagined land beyond the fabled Hesperus, where the love apples bloom. He understood Elaine now, and Guinevere, and the Lady of Shalott.

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He saw her only for a moment the first day or two, being busy with his accounts of the vineyards, which the master examined, and then in taking note of many commands he was to have executed during the summer's leisure. In particular Herr von Flülen led him into the lower chamber of the donjon, which was kept locked, and wherein Judassohn had not presumed to enter until now. It was a large chamber, with great stone walls raised upon the solid rock. By the light of a candle the dwarf beheld upon one side a heavy wooden door, rudely painted over, and wrenched half from its hinges. This, explained his employer, had been supposed to lead to a treasure chamber. The French had torn it open only to uncover a solid stone wall many feet thick. The supposed treasure door led nowhere. By way of token of their wrath at this mischance, the conquerors had slit the throats of the prisoners spared in the flush of the first assault. After this explanation Herr von Flülen held the candle close to the dilapidated door, and bade the dwarf have it cleaned and replaced upon its hinges. 'Unfortunately,' he added, with a humorous glance upon his attendant, 'my ancestor was not like the unprofitable steward of whom the Bible tells us that he buried his talent in the ground: I wish that a Rabenstein had imitated him, and that it might be my fate to dig it up again.'

'In the Bible,' timidly rejoined Wolfgang, 'the man who dug up a buried talent was ill rewarded. Who knows, master, but that you are better off with your legendary talent, if ever it existed, still in the earth?'

The heir of the Rabensteins, standing with a

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flickering tallow dip in his hand. turned to look curiously at his ill-favoured servitor. The light cast a glow upon Judassohn's tawny hair and large ruddy face. 'No wonder,' thought Flülen, 'they call this odd thing the *Red Dwarf!*'

'You mean,' he said aloud, 'that it may have been ill gotten, and, like a good German, you are superstitious enough to think that the wrong-doing—perhaps the blood—nay, even the curse of dying lips, clings to it. Bah! such flimsy fables do not fit these robust *fin-de-siècle* days. Nevertheless we spend our time discussing it to little profit; and so for the honour of the castle you will have the door repaired,—and may the devil find the treasure and bring it to me!'

On the following morning Wolfgang was busy in the garden, with a basket on his arm, gathering vegetables to garnish the *kalbscoteletten* that Mina would serve for the master's dinner. Only a tiny area was allotted to the growth of sweet peas and red cabbages and parsley, with a fringe about them of pansies and mignonette; and so it happened that his quick ears caught the first step of Gisela's approach, and turning quickly, he beheld her standing in the gateway, with face uplifted and with arms bared to the elbow raised to the sprays of honeysuckle that hung from the arch above.

She came towards him, smiled, wished him good morning, and glanced at the contents of his basket, while he stood bareheaded before her. Then she raised her eyes and looked at him attentively, while her smile broadened to a rippling laugh. 'That is why they call you the Red Dwarf,' she exclaimed, nodding at his shaggy head of sandy hair; 'and you



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make yourself useful here, it seems, and papa says you can paint, and that you will restore the picture on the treasure door yourself. And do you not find it lonesome, with no one to speak to but Mina and the cook?’

‘No,’ answered Judassohn, simply; ‘so many voices speak from the stones of Rabenstein.’

‘Ah yes,’ the girl assented pleasantly. ‘Mina said something about your reading old books. You love Nature, and so do I. There was a garden party here last summer,—two hundred people,—it was divine, and somebody recited a beautiful poem about something. And you read poetry too, and you think the elves still haunt our German woods?’

‘They would be sure to do so,’ replied the dwarf, with quivering lips, ‘if you walked through them.’

‘I!’ echoed the girl, with a frank look of astonishment. ‘God forbid that I should tempt them! Do not you see that ring? Perhaps you know, for Mina may have told you, that I am engaged to be married—and any child understands that the nymphs, or whatever you call them, shun our nineteenth-century loves. Even Graf Aura said so when we walked over the Niederwald together as betrothed, though he explained to me that with an electric burner and two or three chemicals he could make a spectre cross our path. Do you believe it could be done? and if you met Morgan le Fay in one of those long winding wood paths yonder, would you think it was only oxygen and an incandescent flame?’

The dwarf listened in silence, and answered nothing. His thoughts instinctively reverted to the pierced heart of his confirmation class. Betrothed! and why should

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not she be betrothed, and walk the Niederwald with whom she pleased, and tell it him after as blithely as the Loreley sang to the drowning boatmen? He knew that what he felt was not love, for though men and women in love might die, the books agreed it was of joy; while he felt only the fire out of which love is born—and that is anguish beyond the sting of death.

‘Yes,’ she continued, unheeding his silence, and replacing a stray lock of yellow hair that the wind blew in her eyes, ‘we are to be married some day, when the Count has a little money to live upon—if that time ever comes. I must go now: you have your work, and I have letters to write. Put a carrot in your basket; soup without a sliced carrot is no better than a song without words. And so good-bye, red dwarf.’

The next day Judassohn was returning from an errand to a neighbouring village. The afternoon was warm, the slumbrous Rhineland lay steeped in golden sunshine, and, passing through one of the long walks in which Gisela had fancifully suggested his meeting with Morgan le Fay, he seated himself upon a gnarled tree-trunk to rest his small limbs. In every direction sloped vineyards, and above them stretched a scarified line of cliffs. Far away extended the glistening river, with an excursion steamboat belching forth a heavy cloud of smoke. He was astonished to see a little barefoot girl approaching him through the vineyards, who, when she came to where he sat, paused and gravely wished him good evening. The dwarf observed her with attention, for her dress seemed different from the familiar peasant garb, and her keen grey eyes looked at him intently, as though with unutterable meaning.

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‘You are a stranger here, and have lost your way?’ he queried.

The child burst into a peal of merry laughter at so absurd a thought. ‘Why,’ said she, ‘I have lived hereabouts all my life, and know the place far better than you!’

‘And I suppose you know my name?’

‘Mercy on us, yes: who knows not the Red Dwarf of Rabenstein?’

And through the breathless silence of the fading afternoon the little man seemed to hear deep down in his heart the mocking peal of the world’s laughter—‘the Dwarf! the Red Dwarf of Rabenstein!’

‘Since you have stopped to speak,’ he resumed petulantly, ‘doubtless you have something to say?’

‘I met a beautiful young lady at the castle; she bade me come hither to meet you and whisper I am Morgan le Fay.’

It was the Dwarf’s turn to laugh. ‘A pretty conceit!’ he chuckled; ‘and perhaps she taught you your part, and how to prate of bygone days?’

‘I do not need to be taught,’ replied the child, with roguish mystification. ‘I know those days better than she.’

Wolfgang observed his droll visitor abstractedly. An odd fancy had come to him—a mystical thought resembling the weird phantasies wherein his favourite Heine abounded—of a sprite like this returning from the old romantic times to the prosaic present, young and fair and spiritual as ever. ‘And if it be true,’ he mused, ‘that a genius unseen, yet not unheard, may speak to the individual intelligence of the past of a lifetime—might not some occult presence



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murmur of the idyllic meaning of half forgotten centuries?'

'Do not forget me!' cried the child, breaking in upon his reverie; 'remember I am Morgan le Fay.'

But Judassohn's attention had become fixed upon another figure, that, in the guise of a decrepit old woman bearing a burden of dry sticks, came laboriously up the path from the lower vineyards. She fastened her hollow eyes upon him, and leaning upon a staff, repeated querulously, 'Morgan le Fay! Who says that I am Morgan le Fay?'

She had caught the last words spoken, and had taken them to herself. The dwarf turned to look for the child, but she was nowhere to be seen. The straight paths, the vineyards, the sloping hill sides were all spread before him, but Morgan le Fay had vanished. He turned abruptly back upon the woman. Could it be that these two odd beings, the elfish child and the withered beldame, were one and the same! Had the child, with her strange prattle, appeared only to his mental vision as a semblance of the poetic past, and was the crone now before him, with her faggot of sticks, but a type of the dusty and haggard present? But the new-comer left him little time for such idle speculation. She raised her bony hand, and, pointing to the castle with a strange gesture, as though indicating some legendary region beyond the visible horizon, exclaimed,—

'Is it there! There, deep in its heart, lies the Rheingold you all prate about. Shall the old revert to the scenes of their infancy, and I not know what happened!'

Without another word she moved by him, and, resuming her way, plodded slowly along the ascending

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path through the drowse of the twilight, until, at the crest of the hill side, her bent figure passed from view.

That night, as Judassohn composed himself to sleep, he felt like one who has been walking among such pageants as fill the Arabian Nights. Through his shutterless window he could see the stars, which reminded him of Gisela, and he wondered whether she, too, ever gazed wistfully upon them, or whether, in this busy, hurrying, nineteenth-century life, she had no time to bestow upon anything so far from earth. Across his dreams floated geni, that changed from youth to age, whispering of treasure caves, and telling strange legends of the love of dwarfs for the radiant daughters of the King.

Not many days later Herr von Flülen and Gisela left Rabenstein for their home in Coblentz. Wolfgang had seen her frequently since their meeting in the garden, and usually she had stopped to speak a kindly word. Had it not been for an animating purpose which had suddenly sprung up within him, the prospect of this departure would have overspread poor Judassohn's little sphere with gloom. The entire garrison turned out to salute the master and his daughter. Half-way down the hill went a porter with their portmanteaux on his shoulder. Mina and the cook stood curtsying near the gate, and the dwarf waited alone, hat in hand. He was heavy-hearted enough; nor was he made happier by the sight of the posy of flowers the goddess had plucked, for he divined for whom they were destined. Yet he mastered himself, and smiled at destiny as many a greater philosopher has done. Perhaps Gisela read something in his wistful eyes as she paused to bid him good-bye.

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‘Some day, in the autumn, we shall come again,’ she said; ‘and you will be glad to see us, for you are glad to have seen me now.’

‘It has been the event of a lifetime,’ murmured the dwarf, aghast at his own hardihood, and bowing his head.

Herr von Flülen, standing near, caught the words and smiled. ‘Who should say, after that,’ he murmured to himself, ‘that politeness is wholly lost?’

But when they were gone and Wolfgang had seen the last of Gisela’s white gown and fluttering ribbons far down the hill side, he went to the treasure chamber, locked himself in, and lighted a lamp which cast a clear ruddy glow upon the walls. Here was the purpose that he was resolved to live—or die—for. He felt, as by an unerring intuition, that failure to recover the legendary Rabenstein treasure would break his heart, and he approached his task with extreme deliberation. His chess studies had taught him that but few things in this world cannot be accomplished if the right means are employed. He had already mapped out the elements of his undertaking, much as he dissected the features of a chess problem. The treasure must either be underground or in some secret recess within the walls. He divided the area in and out of the castle into sections, into each of which he would dig—commencing, however, with the easiest part of his work and dealing first with every square foot of the building. He had prepared a list of every room, closet, and passage, and had marked against each the distinct parts of the search to be made. Floors were to be taken up piecemeal and relaid. Lintels of doors

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and casements of windows were to be removed and panelling displaced. He would climb each chimney and scrutinise the interior stonework. The walls would be scraped and measurements made to discover if their inner and outer surfaces and thicknesses corresponded. The last place to be searched would be the well, which must be emptied, after which he would descend it. For this assistance would be needed, and he had mentally selected the son of a neighbouring vine-grower to help in the more difficult part of his labour. The work began, and ten days were spent in general preliminary investigations. No beaver ever delved more indefatigably ; but the only definite result was to demonstrate the immensity of the task he had set himself. The effect of this disturbance of the calm to which the two serving-women were habituated may be imagined. Unable to pursue his work without their knowledge, and often without their wondering gaze, he thought to keep them quiet by enlisting their co-operation. To their frequent remonstrances against possible injury to the property, the dwarf invariably quoted the substance of Herr von Flülen's words : ' I wish that some ancestor of mine had buried a talent in the ground, and that it might be my luck to dig it up again ! ' So day after day, from sunrise to sunset, the dwarf tapped the walls in search of hollow spaces, and tested the mortar, and clambered up and down a ladder, scanning every inch from floor to ceiling, and taking out a plank or a panel here and there. Near by stood Mina and her companion, anxiously observing these singular proceedings, and wondering if the dwarf, with his grimaces and mutterings, and his monkey-like scramblings up and

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down, were not a madman, to whom their master had unwittingly entrusted his estate.

When this quest had gone on for a fortnight, without other result than to cover the rooms in which it was conducted with dust and to deface the woodwork everywhere, Wolfgang suspended his operations and devoted an entire day to the analysis of his problem. On rising from his couch he vowed neither to eat nor drink that day until a clue to the mystery was discovered. At noon, the compassionate Mina, making her way up the winding stair to his room with a plate of food, was met and nearly overturned by the dwarf rushing headlong down.

‘*Gott steh mir bei!*’ ejaculated the woman, as the platter fell in fragments at her feet, ‘the poor creature is raving, and this very day will I write to the master.’ Wolfgang heeded not, but rushed in all haste to the treasure chamber, lighting his lamp as before. It had suddenly flashed upon him that the clue was to be sought somewhere about the wooden door which the French had loosened from its hinges. The inquiry had suggested itself, ‘Why should the occupants of the castle place a door over a solid wall?’ Tradition named that particular spot the treasure chamber. But why was an *empty* treasure chamber secured by an outside iron gate, whereof the trace still remained, and which, doubtless, the French had wrenched away altogether? He seized the wooden door before which he and Herr von Flülen had stood, and easily removing it altogether from its hinges, dragged it into the sunlight. The first glance showed that the painting upon its surface, which he had been ordered to have restored, was of the crudest kind. How odd that a common door

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in a dark cell—a door that led nowhere—should be painted at all! He examined its surface minutely, and was electrified, upon scratching away a little of the colour, to discover that one painting had been superposed upon another. Beneath this crude delineation of figures was another subject; and here—the dwarf's whole being thrilled as he uttered the fateful words—here was the key to the secret! To work he went with lye, rubbing softly and evenly, and gradually bringing away the superficial paint and exposing a subject executed long before, and by a more practised hand. Wolfgang's heart leaped when he recognised that it was an inscription, written in an ancient and barbarous German dialect, which, presumably, was the vernacular of the lordly Rabensteins, and which he deciphered with difficulty. The sense of its few words seemed to be this:—

‘He who would enter  
Must pass where is no door.’

Here then, at last, was a direct message, clearly relating to the treasure, and intended to convey, in this evasive form, an indication as to how that treasure might be reached. Why had it been daubed over with uncouth figures? Perhaps at the time of the siege, when the fate of the castle seemed desperate, this device was imagined to veil the significant words from the assailants, should resistance be overpowered. Why had not the door been destroyed—split in pieces and tossed upon the nearest fire? Possibly because the Rabensteins wished to leave it for the future information of their successors, whoever these might be. And where is it, then, that there obviously is no door? Ha, ha!—the dwarf laughed long and

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loud as this query presented itself, till the frightened maids listened to him aghast from round the corner. 'Where there is no door is in the solid rock of the stone floor, you gaping fool!' he cried to himself, slapping his leg in uproarious merriment. But the afternoon was far spent; he was exhausted by want of food and nervous excitement; he would eat, drink and sleep now, and to-morrow it should go hard but he would make his way into the bowels of the earth. So he rewarded himself with an extravagant feast—a sausage wrapped in stewed cabbage leaves, plenty of brown bread and cheese, and a deep, delicious draught of beer; then he lay down upon his bed, dressed as he was, and slept for ten hours.

The next morning, at break of day, he was at work with hammer and chisel, and two lamps to light him, splitting away fragments of the floor, the central portion whereof was immediately revealed to be not solid rock, but, beneath the mould of years, a layer of stones mortared together. The morning passed in this vigorous chipping and tearing out of stones, which he tossed together into a corner.

'Ach! Heaven be praised!' sobbed Mina, with tears in her honest eyes, as at twelve o'clock Herr von Flülen and his daughter made their appearance, in answer to the alarming summons she had despatched the previous day, bringing with them a lusty fellow with a heavy stick in case this crazy dwarf proved unmanageable. 'He is mad!' she cried, 'stark mad; all this blessed day he has been locked in the treasure tower breaking stones. Get rid of the mischievous wretch, I implore you, master, or he will bring the whole castle down about our ears.'

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A noisy summons at the locked door received no response. They listened. All was still, and through the seams they could distinguish that the room was brightly lighted.

‘What can the rogue be about?’ ejaculated Herr von Flülen, motioning his man forward. A vigorous effort, and the locked door yielded. A strange spectacle met the view of Herr von Flülen, Gisela, the strong fellow and the frightened maids as they peeped in. At the centre of the floor was an irregular opening, and in one corner a great heap of stones. Wolfgang was nowhere in sight, but as they looked he suddenly emerged, like a Jack-in-the-box, from the aperture, his face covered with beads of moisture and flushed with tremendous excitement. For surprisers and surprised alike it was a case of mutual astonishment, but the dwarf was the first to recover himself.

‘Rheingold!’ he screamed, with arms frantically outstretched; it is the fabled Rheingold; it is all here—the old witch spoke truth—and only to think that the feet of the French must have trampled the dust above it for hours!’

Great heaps of money amid shreds of leather purses, a chest of silver coin, jewelled crucifixes, women’s bracelets, gems plucked from their settings, gold chains and fillets, chalices, a score of diamonds: what industrious tax-gatherers must the ancient Rabensteins have been, and how large and varied a *clientèle* contributed to their hoard!

Herr von Flülen proved himself more thrifty than the unprofitable steward of Biblical fame, and made good use of the talent his ancestors had buried in the ground. As the summer went by the castle was



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restored, a handsome dower settled upon Gisela, a liberal largess distributed among the poor, and the proceeds of the rest invested in American railways. The treasure chamber was converted into a wine cellar, and filled with a couple of thousand bottles of choice vintages. For all his German sentiment Herr von Flülen was a practical man, and had been heard to affirm that there are few things more musical in one of Wagner's operas than the drawing of a cork. The dwarf received a purse of gold, his salary was doubled, he was named seneschal of Rabenstein for life, and the radiant Gisela, in a moment of impulsive gratitude, gave him her hand to kiss. As Mina remarked, he had nothing now to do but eat, drink, and be merry.

He had, indeed, much to make him happy, for had not he conferred the greatest possible benefit upon the woman he adored with a distant and hopeless passion! There were preparations, too, for Gisela's wedding, which filled every heart with joy, and made Judasshon grow thin and wan for very gladness.

In the blithe springtime following, at the season of roses, when the sunny woods were haunted with the poesy of legendary figures, Gisela and her husband came with a couple of attendants to Rabenstein for the honeymoon. There was no fluttering of banners to honour their arrival, but Mina handed Count Aura a telegram, which he hastily opened and waved above his head like the white plume of Navarre.

'*Hoch viva!*' he cried aloud: 'the American shares have risen 10 per cent.'

'And where,' asked Gisela, glancing about, 'is Judassohn?'

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Mina and the others could not tell. He had gathered together all his belongings two days before, had shaken the maids very sadly by the hand for good-bye, and had gone on board a steamboat at Coblenz and sailed away down the Rhine, the saints only knew whither.

But, as she listened, Gisela's glance fell on a corner of the courtyard just beneath her window, where a great bunch of tiny flowers—the German *vergissmeinicht*—was growing where flowers had never bloomed before. At the sight her eyes filled with tears, for she understood the passion which the dwarf's great heart had carried in silence, and knew that the forget-me-nots breathed its humble and mute farewell.

## FORZA DEL DESTINO

A YEAR ago at a curiosity shop in Venice I bought a silver-framed mirror of seventeenth-century workmanship, richly chiselled, and as lack-lustre as an old man's eyes. It was a magnificent specimen, and to a lover of fine old things well worth the forty thousand francs the dealer asked.

I removed my acquisition to Danielli's and set about wiping it clear of the contaminating tarnish of many handlings. Under this process one of the screws which held the wooden back in place fell out, quite rusted, exposing what seemed a discoloured wadding of paper which had been inserted between mirror and backing to keep them in position.

I was on the point of throwing this away, when, an inner sheet becoming unfolded, I read in a curious fifteenth-century dialect the words, "ceased to breathe between the 17th and 18th of August." More than this I failed at the moment to decipher, the chirography being full of fantastic complications and the vernacular quite beyond the scope of my nineteenth-century Italian. A summary examination disclosed that what had appeared to be wadding was a parchment manuscript of evidently greater antiquity than the mirror into which some careless hand had fastened it. I invited a professor of Renaissance

literature to examine it, and with his assistance addressed myself to the delightful task of rendering it into modern phraseography, at first recovering a word here and there, presently putting together a few entire sentences, and becoming suddenly conscious of the absorbing interest of my work when the first morning's study brought to light the startling names Almodoro . . . Villa Belmonte . . . Portia . . . Bassanio! A week's labour rendered all but two pages from Dantesque into colloquial Italian. The writing on the first and last pages, which had rested against the mirror and the metal backing, was blurred beyond recovery. The character of the manuscript seems to point to Leonardo Loredan, who was Doge between the years 1501 and 1521, as its probable author, a question upon which the reader will form his own opinion. An unmistakable tone of authority runs through its pages, and the allusion to Shylock's trial is significant. The idiom employed belongs to the close of the fifteenth century, and the paper upon which it is written is that used in the Doge's offices. The writer alludes to himself as an old man, and Loredan was over seventy. The habits and opinions professed in the narrative accord with what is known of him. He mentions his intimate acquaintance with Almodoro, who is historically known as that Doge's soothsayer. It is evident that the writer was an illustrious personage to whom the individuals named by him were well known, and to whom they confided an accurate version of what had transpired. For want of a better title, I name this English translation by an exclamation the Professor murmured as the meaning of the document before us became disclosed. It seemed, indeed, a fateful revelation, fixing like a

mirage upon the Venetian horizon the phantom of familiar figures—imprint after all these years with the impulse and emotion of a vanished life.

. . . . .

#### THE MANUSCRIPT

. . . beneath the sky of Italy the Ancients gazed on, in view of mountain crests that were to them poetic landmarks ; standing beside crumbling fragments of their heroic occupation, and within sight of that sea where their fabled sirens sang ; our steps amid the myrtle groves and ilexes are haunted by musical refrains of that archaic age.

And so, sometimes, strolling down the long walk of an Italian garden, amid its reverie and shade, a gleam of mystical and incomparable sunlight flashes upon the fancy, linking the present with other and tenderly remembered days.

If it be true that for the young and light-hearted such a garden should be spangled with many-coloured flowers, surely the severe gravity and suggestive vistas and sculptured fountains and lichen-grown stonework of a Venetian Villa are better suited to the reposeful contemplations of maturity.

It is amid the graceful surroundings of such a retreat—the world-renowned Paduan Belmonte—that Portia and Bassanio live. And I purpose to set forth their strange adventure, immediately after they became man and wife, even as themselves and Antonio and Almodoro recited it to me, confining myself scrupulously to the bare truth.

Hither Lorenzo returned one morning a month ago from Padua. Portia and Bassanio had been



*"Forza del 'Destino.'"*



married one week, and to what extraordinary conditions had they been brought in that brief time! With them were Jessica and Gratiano and Nerissa, and in the web of trouble which had woven itself about their lives it may well be that they had forgotten their enemy Shylock, whom I myself saw in those selfsame days, sitting mad, beggared, harmless, upon the steps of the Rialto, for ever counting out with eager thumb and finger three thousand ducats into his empty palm. And albeit Lorenzo brought the glad tidings that Antonio was speeding from Venice, if haply he might discover a remedy for their distress, nevertheless he alighted with wrathful countenance, beholding the page Pipistrello of whom all Venice was soon to be talking. Which page looked a pert boy, just the rogue to win a ne'er-do-well baggage like Jessica, and Lorenzo was on edge with their whisperings, perhaps surmising that a faithless daughter is indifferent timber whereof to make a faithful wife. Likewise it was an odd circumstance that the page and the Jewess bore no small resemblance one to the other, each blessed with lustrous hazel eyes and voluptuous lips and beautiful oval line of cheek and chin and aquiline nose, and fine white hands, and a mass of tangled hair clustering upon the ivory neck.

On that particular morning the page was strolling towards the terrace in the direction of that chestnut coppice which was his favourite heartsease, and from whose seclusion one may gaze upon the luminous horizon. Here beside a carved balustrade, under overleaning red oleanders, the idle boy would sit, and hither Jessica came to him on some mysterious errand. And I myself have seen at that place an



ancient statue, a figure of Diana, of surpassing workmanship, probably one of the thousands brought by Mummius from Corinth, whereof Portia told me that it had been placed in the grove hard by before a Roman votive spring. Which statue being unearthed some centuries later from beneath a heap of rubbish, its antique nudity was plastered with stucco, and it was converted into a Madonna to adorn a Cardinal's tomb. And now, restored minus a foot and an ear to something of its Pagan semblance, it stands looking down the distance of a sun-touched walk with outstretched hand, as in wistful salutation to the shadows that have passed it by.

Whoever approaches Belmonte from Padua sees, as he leaves the vanishing line of poplars behind, a white speck high up against the background of yellowing chestnut boughs. This is Diana, popularly called the Devil's Concubine, since a Dominican cursed her for a wanton from the Cathedral pulpit. Despite all Dominicans, she bears the loving impress of the hand that poised her, and the semblance it may be of some Grecian model. To this spot, a century ago, came three ladies feasting with their gallants, and being mirthful, they pledged Diana in Malvoisie, one of them calling her a saucy jade to stand thus half naked before the men, and dashed some wine in the statue's face, which presently, while the revellers looked on startled and silent, flushed faintly beneath the glistening drops. The mark whereof it keeps to this day—*sangue di Diana*, cry the women, the chemical juice of the grape, think the men, flecks of metallic rust in the marble, say I.

In the silence of that early morning, rippled only by the twittering of birds, Portia still slept the fevered

sleep of the heavy-hearted, while for an instant her fancy, so she says, flew to the familiar scenes of Venice, and amid the imagined brilliance of its dustless air she beheld again the transcendent pinnacles of jasper and carbuncle, the alabaster fretwork of its arches, and the sculptured fountains and mosaics of its palaces. And beyond many shining façades she saw before St. Mark's the sunlit Piazza with steps russet-stained and crusted, till upon the crisp breeze, touched with the fragrance of tiny gardens, came the rhythmical pealing of monastery bells that swelled to strains of music, and at its sound she instinctively awoke, conscious that there is no more significant ill-omen than music heard in dreams.

At this same hour, Bassanio, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, rose from his couch at the other extremity of the building, and, having dressed himself in the garments he had thrown off some hours before, opened wide his casement and leaned against the balcony. His face was haggard with furtive dismay—a curious transformation from the radiant lover of two weeks before. Upon the horizon stood the wind-swept Dolomites, with a peep upon the sapphire dome of Antelao, and near by the red walls of Padua, and at his feet the glistening Brenta. In the garden below, lounging on a bench, was the page Pipistrello, fanning himself like an effeminate coxcomb with one of Jessica's fans, glancing about with stealthy, half-closed eyes. Then Bassanio withdrew unnoticed into his room, and Lorenzo, whose knocking had been unheeded, heard him mutter, '*Fool! fool!*'

Antonio, upon his arrival an hour later, was led whither Portia awaited. He was shocked at her appearance, the suave and happy girl suddenly

transformed to a pale, careworn, dangerous-looking woman. What ill beginning had they made, this fair young husband and wife, the pride and jewel of Venice! She addressed him as one able to save Bassanio and herself from an evil she was evidently at a loss to define, but which she indicated in hurried sentences.

On their wedding night Bassanio had retired to his room and she had not seen him again till late the following day, when his agitation surprised her. Venetian brides are not usually shown the cold shoulder in such summary fashion. Was he ill or troubled by evil news? No, but he had passed a bad night; and after this answer and half an hour's careless talk, lapsed into an extraordinary lassitude and dejection. From Gratiano and Lorenzo she learned that upon going to his room he had dismissed his personal attendants, keeping only the page Pipistrello, to whom he was overheard giving orders for the morrow. But these orders proved lengthy, for the page was there all night; and for hours Jessica, listening at the keyhole, caught sounds of eager talking, of striding up and down, of sobbing—until at length all was still, and in the morning the page, who had apparently slept upon a sofa in the anteroom, came out and walked away.

‘And who,’ asked Portia, ‘is this Pipistrello?’ A youth Lorenzo had taken into his service in Venice and brought hither, and who since then would have been dismissed had he not suddenly and unaccountably transferred his attendance to Bassanio. The second night was a repetition of the first, except that the talking had been briefer. Pipistrello had again slept in Bassanio's ante-chamber, and on the morrow that odd husband went away alone to ramble about the

fields. Then Portia angrily summoned this intrusive page upon whom she had never before cast eyes, and having made him swear before a graven image, questioned him for an hour. Who was he? why had he left Lorenzo's service? why thrust himself unbidden upon Bassanio's? had he aught to answer to Lorenzo's bad opinion? what business had he in her husband's room at night?

Pipistrello presented himself with perfect self-possession, betrayed no uneasiness during a searching interrogatory, and replied plausibly to every question. His bearing was faultless, he was evidently of superior education, and the sharpest feminine sallies failed to disturb his equanimity. His justification, such as it was, seemed made with frankness and with that deferential tone to which all women are sensible. It began to appear so unreasonable to blame this sweet-mannered lad for his master's vagaries, that Portia at length found herself listening with complaisance to the vicissitudes of a troubled life. Her own personal resources having thus failed, like a rational woman she summoned Almodoro.

Of this famous mathematician I need only say that he is the subtlest of all our learned men, and that his application of a curious theory of lines and angles to the intimate affairs of life has to my own knowledge produced astounding revelations. He brought with him to Belmonte his familiar, which is of so odd a nature that I have seen it in his pocket, in form like a scarabæus covered with forbidden symbols; though again at Cyprus, riding with him one morning amid the sun-flecked woods, when the day came slanting over the crags, we heard a sound far away amid the hills, faint and remote as those imagined voices the

fancy hears before the waking, and turning to me with a smile, he pointed thither as who should say, Lo, it is there! So, having been instructed by letter, he presented himself in the guise of an Oriental merchant at the Villino beside the Brenta where Lorenzo lodged.

While Jessica bargained with him for his turban, a cup of carmine lip-salve and a game of cards, he noticed, standing by as they sat eating, that Pipistrello used a fork whereas Jessica thrust her fingers in the dish, that the page's flute whereof we have heard so much lay on the table; and divined from certain unfailling tokens that they shared between them some secret essential to his errand. Then after Almodoro had been twenty-four hours at Belmonte, working with demoniac activity, and unaware of Antonio's arrival, he sought Portia unannounced in the room to which Antonio had been brought half an hour before. They both turned towards him in silent expectation, reading as he entered something of urgent import upon his usually impassive face.

He did not wait to be questioned. 'I have discovered three things,' he began, with a quiet little ironical smile, 'the first of which is that Pipistrello is a woman.'

Antonio's heart beat at this, and Portia listened with silent emotion to an announcement which explained so much while casting so grave a reproach upon her husband. Almodoro eyed his client with quizzical intentness: as all the world knows, he hates women, and appears to find a curious relish to his studies in their humiliation. 'More than this,' he added, 'I have calculated Pipistrello's life, and find that she—or he, as you please—will have ceased to breathe between the 17th and 18th of August.'



*"Forza del Destino."*



'To-day is August 17th,' murmured Antonio, struck with the coincidence and glancing from one to the other.

'And lastly,' continued Almodoro, 'my instruments have disclosed the existence of a secret panel in Bassanio's room, which delicacy forbade my opening.'

'A secret panel in my own house that I never knew of!' ejaculated Portia; and desiring Antonio to await her return, she beckoned Almodoro to follow.

Bassanio's room, which they entered, is one that has been occupied by successive owners of Belmonte, one or two of whom have left upon it traces of their individual tastes. At one side, facing two windows, is a great walnut bed with carved figures; between the casements is a dressing-table with mirror and perfumes and brushes and ointments; at one side, between candles and holy water, opens an oratory niche with *prie-dieu* and Madonna; in the centre are elaborately cushioned but uncomfortable chairs, and before them a table whereon, when I saw it, the contents of a leather writing-case—parchment, ink-vial, seals, wax, and quills—had been emptied; there was also a tapestry screen, a richly inlaid ebony cabinet, a lute suspended against the wall, and an ivory figure representing a girl preparing for the bath.

The wise man conducted Portia directly to the niche which his treasure magnet had detected, and at sight of its contents her outstretched hand trembled, and the magician's swarthy face flushed. But a glance showed that the objects before them could not have been used by the living generation. They were all covered with the dust of many years. There



was a small crystal vase containing the shrivelled remnants of a flower ; a sheathless stiletto, crusted with stains ; a silk purse of sequins ; a case of vials whose contents were variously intended to restore the hair and the complexion ; an empty blue bottle, such as has been known to hold a poison or its antidote ; a little box filled with love-lozenges, and a packet of letters, yellow with age, and tied with a ragged satin band. Portia knew that these things must have belonged to her grandmother of blessed memory, whose room this had been sixty years ago, who in her time had been a famous beauty, who had been left a young widow under dramatic circumstances, who was very religious and had caused the oratory to be made. The packet contained twenty letters, written by various masculine hands, only one being in a woman's delicate chirography ; this Portia unfolded and found to be a memorandum written by her grandmother on her sixteenth birthday, setting forth sixteen good resolves—with an endorsement made thirty years later, to the effect that every one of these purposes had been thwarted. Quite apart lay the miniature of a child whose face was unfamiliar to Portia, although it bore a marked family resemblance. Whose child, she wondered, could it have been ?

‘It is like opening a grave,’ whispered Portia to the mathematician at her side ; then closing the panel, which adjusted itself with a sharp snap, she murmured, ‘let us leave those musty secrets to themselves and pass to the matter more immediately concerning us.’

Thus challenged, Almodoro pointed to an amber set of chessmen drawn up in battle-array upon their

board, and remarked : ' The supreme activities of life bear an analogy to the pure forces of that exercise. In each are found the refinements of abstract thought, the graceful subtleties of *finesse*, the decisive attributes of power. A pungent lesson of each is to show the fool's blunder punished and the master-stroke rewarded. In chess the results derived from position correspond with like consequences produced in life by the intelligent grouping of circumstances. The climax—whether on the chessboard or in a situation such as yours—is determined by some dominating condition that governs all the others. If, for example, we can bring a pawn to the eighth square and exchange it for a Queen ; or if in a struggle for life or reputation we can make a thrust at the heart——'

' A thrust at the heart ! ' interrupted Portia, turning upon him with keen, bright eyes.

' Yes, and since you summoned me here not merely to theorise I have——'

' Hush ! '

Portia and Almodoro were so long gone that Antonio was not sorry when a servant approached to say his master had just learned of his arrival and wished to see him in the Marble Gallery : so thither Antonio went, smiling at this bridegroom who would not even traverse that quarter of the house his wife occupied.

Bassanio's morning reverie had brought him to an imperative resolve, which he lost no time in communicating. Motioning Antonio to a seat, he began almost without the prelude of a salutation.

' How strange a fate gave Portia to me and

ruined her life, when the same chance might as readily have bestowed her upon any one of a dozen other suitors!’ Then, with a passionate gesture unusual to his gentle calm, he added, ‘*Married—yet not married!*—there is the story.’

‘Not married?’ echoed the other, gazing earnestly into Bassanio’s eyes and comprehending how ominous an apparition confronted his friend in the person of Pipistrello. ‘Married and yet not married!’ What then had become of Bassanio’s adoration of Portia? And Antonio tells me he felt more than ever before the truth of our trite saying that one love swallows another as fish devour their like in the sea. Then, if only for the sake of rousing Bassanio to reason, he plied him with question upon question.

Portia’s husband laid his hand upon Antonio’s, and speaking with the deliberation of one brought to bay by such a stern emergency as may confront any man in a lifetime, answered :

‘Two years ago I met the lady known to you as Pipistrello. She was betrothed to another, and—censure me as you may—she and I left Venice together. Upon my soul we did so with the intention of being immediately married. She was taken from me by her family and I was made to believe her dead—a false funeral, a lying priest and doctor—until a week ago, when on my wedding night she came to my room in the disguise of a page. You who love me can understand the anguish in which I have lived since that hour.’

‘Verily,’ assented Antonio, sinking back overpowered upon his divan, ‘two loves under one roof are . . . shall I say two too many? But now, if you will be your rational self, the remedy is simple.

Your first duty is to your wife, and remembering what you and I owe to Portia and the stately future that awaits you with her, it is impossible to hesitate.'

'It is true,' assented Bassanio gravely, 'that I have sent Pipistrello to Jessica, to whom, as a woman will, she has told all.'

'It would be far better to send her this very day to Venice.'

'I mean to take her there this very day myself.'

'Madman! as if Portia had not already enough to forgive.'

'I have summoned you and have waited all these days, that you, who own the gift of silver speech, might break this story to her in your fairest words.'

'She will have me flung out of the house at the first mention that a husband can thus forsake his wife.'

'She suffers the cruellest wrong—one need but look in her face to read it; nevertheless the wrong is one the Church has often been persuaded to soften, for the ceremony of our marriage can readily be annulled. There is one argument, you know, and only one, that never fails, the wide world over. As for me, duty speaks to-day as its voice spoke in my childhood, with the same authority, the same truth, and with an irresistible attraction that perhaps is new; and when an evil alternative has a man by the throat, it is a direct gift of mercy if he is still able to distinguish the right.'

I who fill these pages never beheld this so-called Pipistrello; but like others, now that all is over, I wonder if indeed her brief life was spent with us in Venice and what it may have been. The interest she has attracted is due to the prominence of Bassanio

and Portia and Antonio and to their curious entanglement with Shylock. But to an old man it will be forgiven if in each brave and beautiful Venetian girl appears the reflected type of Venice. And musing upon Pipistrello's fate I have pictured her in happier days, habited in maidenly attire, kneeling in the shadow of St. Mark's golden arches, whispering her secrets to the Madonna; I fancy her on the *fiesta* of the *boccolo* receiving the rosebud that breathes an admirer's passion; I see her brought to bay by fate and overborne, and I cannot but believe that such valiant hearts are our guardian angels.

Their hasty talk had gone no farther when it was interrupted by the major-domo. He looked strangely discomposed, and stammered that a violent alarm had come from Lorenzo's Villino, and that, in the absence of a physician, Almodoro was being everywhere sought. Jessica had suddenly been taken dangerously ill. They rushed to the wise man's room, where he lay asleep on a Turkish camp couch, taking his habitual morning siesta, from which he awoke as lightly as a startled hound. Upon being told what had happened, he became curiously uneasy, and taking something from a travelling wallet which he kept carefully locked, at once followed them.

They found Jessica in convulsions, and Lorenzo holding a crumpled letter which bade him give a certain basket of peaches to Pipistrello. The pretended page was away in the woods with her flute, Lorenzo had been with Bassanio, and in the interval that greedy hussy had eaten two of the peaches. The astrologer instantly poured something down Jessica's throat, after which she became better, whereupon he decamped without waiting for explana-

tions. He seemed preoccupied and irritable, and left the Villino abruptly, striding away none knew whither, and was seen there no more. Three hours later, Gratiano, who is a youth of twenty, and was, like Pipistrello, habited in the garb of a page, coming with a message to Lorenzo, was set upon in the grove by two fellows, and had he not luckily been wearing a service baldric, which carried both rapier and main-gauche, would without doubt have lost his life. He came staggering in with a sword-thrust through the ribs, still grasping the blades with which he had wounded both assailants. Pipistrello, who in the midst of these various excitements spent the day *al fresco*, did not return, as it was expected she would do. Can it be that the bravoës were in wait for her, and were misled by Gratiano's attire? However strange the coincidence of these two seemingly random attempts, let me say that, intimately as I have known Almodoro, I have never detected him blundering thus in what he puts his hand to.

It was the languorous afternoon of this self-same day, and drawing towards that moment when twilight—which is for them who keep their souls in peace—approaches; a brilliant day, mellowing the Paduan woods and Veronese gardens and Venetian lagoons with an aureole. Far away stretched the plain, and in the foreground rose the dim walls and cypress silhouettes and clustering belfries of Padua, and above them the Cathedral dome, its painted panes glowing blood-red against the western sky. And now the declining sun, piercing the forest and cresting the Alps, touched the distant Adriatic—spreading thus upon the sea that imperishable *Libro*

*d'oro* whereon Venice writes the story of her fame. Beside the balustrade, and beneath the crimson oleander, sat Pipistrello, unconscious of the dangers she had escaped, and breathing into her flute, says the listening Antonio, such rich and vibrant tones as woke the quick responsive trilling of a bird. I marvelled when they told me Pipistrello had the heart to idle thus and loll at ease, seeing the strait herself was in and the distress her presence brought. Yet here again you may find as many shades to any opinion as there are colours in the sea. Almodoro, who lays the course of all things by intellectual beacons of his own, disdainful of the landmarks and dog's-ears whereby ordinary people grope their way, affirms that this was no unnatural thing for a heart attuned to sadness, saying, 'Who can gaze at sunset upon the mute pathos of a vanishing world and doubt that beyond this land of dreams there floats an undiscovered El Dorado?' Wherefore Antonio came that way himself knows not, further than that it was the same hazard that had already impelled so many strange circumstances. And her back being towards him, he paused an instant, marvelling at her instrument and with what deft fingers she inspired its stops with fugitive refrains that measured upon its little length a lifetime's fleeting emotion. The air she played was unfamiliar, yet seemed some voluptuous caprice he had met years before and had longed ever since to meet again. Through her dainty phrases there trembled a sense akin to those whisperings distinguishable in breaking waves and rustling tree-tops, which men like Almodoro note and understand. And hence it was that the day before, the persuasive rapture of her music had

unfolded to the magician some witchery of an incomparable meaning, through which he had detected the musician's secret.

Of a sudden, as though some intuitive sense made her conscious of an undiscovered presence, she turned and faced Antonio. She knew him not, never having seen him before, but rising composedly, confronted him with a keen glance. He began speaking abruptly, as men impatient of the circumlocution of the feminine mind are apt to do, addressing her rather as some bird of ill-omen which haunts people's wedding night on equivocal adventures. He told me that, as might have been expected, she answered pretty tartly, but that when they had made an end of angry words he appealed to her to remove her presence from Bassanio's life, insisting upon the blemish it must otherwise cast and the danger that would ensue to herself. So, as she seemed not to comprehend this last allusion, he described the plight of Jessica and Gratiano, which could have been intended for no other but herself. Then perceived he the red oleander bush behind her move as though some one lurked unseen behind its cover. But Pipistrello answered :

'It is the lot of many, and Bassanio and I are of them, to be duped and misled and feel their hearts poisoned with an anguish they dare not whisper. Diana yonder, could she turn towards us the wistful pathos of her scarred visage, would tell you that the gods divert themselves with the writhings of our little despair.'

Then Antonio pursued his argument exceeding earnestly, albeit, despite himself, something disarmed, as many a man might be, by the light in her eyes and



the flush that mantled her handsome face and the intense feeling that thrilled in her voice, till she added very softly :

‘Can I forget, or *he* cease to remember, what we have been and what we are to one another? If either were for ever gone, could the other bury out of sight the sweetness of the love that has united us against you all? Not long ago I almost ceased to think upon the future that seemed a place of danger and unrest, but now I hasten to it as to some fair garden whose fragrant paths I know, and its bower where together we shall pluck oblivion of this hateful place, and where perhaps the fabled buds and blossoms that were the promise of Diana in her woodland youth shall whiten again.’

At which words Antonio heard a slight movement behind the oleander, like the start or spasm of one stung to the quick. So, being not a little foiled, he bowed as one who salutes the enemy and walked away out of sight. Nevertheless he smiled at the glibness of a Venetian girl talking thus of gardens and woodlands and fragrant paths. We of Venice are used to find inspiration on the sea, amid its circling birds. Our sonnets smell of the salt-breathed horizon. I myself love equally to spend my time in the woods or on the sea, because in each I find an inexhaustible storehouse of the things humanity has forgotten. But commonly the voices that we hear speak ever from the islands—be they Calypso or Hesperus—where the immortal amaranths bloom. Our songs are those of sirens rather than of sylvan nymphs, and the thread the moon lays on the Adriatic lifts us from earthly scenes to a mystical and transfigured imagery. The very bubbles, drifting

by our windows, reflect in opalescent tints such wayward and fantastic silhouettes, such palaces set with gems and towering spires, such fairy balconies with sky-swung flowers, that when life's journey draws to an end we instinctively shake off the dust of earth, and turn, as to a better world, to bathe our feet in the sea.

Then remembering what Bassanio had said, that at sunset, now not an hour distant, he would join his first love and for ever leave Belmonte, he murmured aloud, 'And then, with the passionate blood of her ancestress in her veins, what will the jealous and vengeful Portia do?'

As if in answer to this ominous query came faintly from the spot he had quitted a wild cry of anguish and affright. Antonio hastened back, only to find where Pipistrello had been standing a crimson splash as if the red oleander had been bleeding.

And amid many speculations, as to what may have happened, all of which till Diana speaks are likely to remain idle gossip, there comes to me the repetition of a thought that will not be silenced, how deeply, perchance, Almodoro's stealthy whisper to Portia—a *thrust at the heart*—may have . . .

The manuscript breaks off as abruptly as it began, nor has an exhaustive search among the catalogues to the millions of musty documents at the Biblioteca San Marco and the Archivio di Venezia been rewarded by the slightest clue to the ultimate fate of Portia and Bassanio. If those vast collections are ever thoroughly examined, some further particulars of them may be recovered; but now they disappear into the oblivion from which this narrative summoned

them, and the identity of Portia's rival is left to conjecture.

My study of the manuscript filled me with a desire to visit the site of Portia's Villa. Of the house no vestige remains, and the dimensions of the park have been largely reduced. But its name, Villa Belmonte, survives, and its position in the outskirts of Padua is easily ascertained. I went to it on foot, conducted by two brown-faced urchins who pointed out the modern dwelling which occupies the place of the ancient edifice and stands in the midst of half a dozen pink and yellow stucco casinos, such as exemplify the taste of modern Italy. A suave-mannered and philosophic-minded *custode* laid aside his tobacco-pipe and pruning-knife to accompany me through the historic ilex groves, answering my questions good-naturedly, and giving me leave to wander to the terrace, where I found the long walks between clipped hedges flanked by weather-stained granite benches and the ancient balustrade which marks the spot where the narrative reached its climax—where Antonio talked with the being whose misfortunes had borne such bitter fruit, where her despairing outcry was followed by so sinister a token of the Venetian Cinque-cento. Here I beheld that faint, fine line of shining peaks—in aspect so masterful, so self-contained, so far removed from the dust and dross of earth—whose contemplation to the Doges of heroic centuries must have held no ordinary significance. Before me spread the Italian *pianura*, its olive and emerald seamed with yellow beneath the midday heat. Almost motionless above the spire of the Paduan Cathedral rose a copper vane, in semblance of the argosy of bygone times whose antique image,

glistening above the cypresses, reflects the prosaic sunshine of to-day. The statue of the Grecian Diana has disappeared, but the dim vistas remain, beautiful as of old in their repose; and in Diana's place broods the haunting memory of the Doge's narrative amid the fleeting shapes one's fancy conjures.

In the upper hall of the Scuola di San Rocco may be seen the portrait of Leonardo Loredan, which I went repeatedly to look at, seeking to stand thus as nearly as may be face to face with him who, presumptively, has left so curious a memorial. The Doge's face is familiarly known, and his life has been minutely traced. Even without the berretta one might recognise the face as that of an Italian, and read in its expression that the original lived in the age of the despots. Self-command, profound study of human nature, a lifetime spent in that atmosphere of mysticism, of intrigue, of refinement, of graceful companionship, and of the audacity and subterfuge of Venetian statecraft, are characteristics which the man's surroundings wrote year by year upon his features.

Near by, in the same room, and close to the famous painting of Almodoro, hangs the picture of a handsome, girlish youth catalogued *Unknown: Early Sixteenth Century*. The eyes are brilliant hazel; under the feathered cap is a mass of curly black hair, and beneath its meditative calm lurks an expression of sensuous resolve. The workmanship resembles that of Almodoro's portrait, which there is reason to believe was painted by himself. On each, in a corner of the canvas, is the alchemic emblem  $\psi$ . Can it be that the astrologer painted both these pictures as souvenirs of his extraordinary life, and may this

geometric figure typify those lines whereof the manuscript speaks as 'curiously applied to the concerns of life,' and which to the wise man and his school may have symbolised those lines of the head, the heart, and the life which palmistry professes?

But more significant than this is the figure of a tiny, odd-shaped bird with outstretched wings in a corner of the youth's picture. It is to all appearance a bat, carelessly drawn upon the dim background, into which its sombre outline has so far sunk as to be almost undistinguishable. The authorities at the Gallery attach no meaning to it, treating it as an item of no consequence. It may, however, be surmised that this odd graffito was intended by the mathematician as a play upon the sobriquet of her whose face he was depicting from memory, and which as such presents a striking confirmation of the story in this literal symbol of the forgotten and ill-fated Pipistrello.

## THE WRAITH OF CLIVEDEN REACH

BEING A SEQUEL TO THE 'ROMANCE OF CLIVEDEN,'  
AS RESTORED FROM THE MANUSCRIPT OF  
ANDREW DEEPEGROVE

CLIVEDEN, *Hallowe'en*, 1703.

THIS morning, because of the Rayne, went I not abroad, but satt casting up my accounts, when of a sudden, the Dore being ajar, I heard the sweete fainte sownde of the old virginall touched exceeding slow, and my harte smote me at what seemed a mysticall greeting, for the musique was a sad tune my lady deftly played in bygone days of happy memorie,—one of those tunes that make the harte beate quick, and fyre the brain. Which I knew to be the hand of my daughter Maudlyn, who ever and anon, the house being forsaken these many yeeres by all but us, doth open again the espinette that stands in its ancient place, where, like your humble servant, it grows somewhat out of joynt each yeere and out of tune with the times. In the midst whereof, little merrie Andrew burst into my room, horn-book in hand, and with an oath declared that the Wraith had been seen last night at the Whyte Place. And Maudlyn coming after, and heering these ill-omened

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tidings, fell all of a tremble and repeated what the Gossips and Beldames the countryside round are wont to say, that this Wraith appears but on the eve of some gruesome thing befalling. So not to suffer a woman and a chyld to fret upon matters none may comprehend, and above all to spare myself Maudlyn's preeching and exhorting (she being grown as nimble with her tongue as with her fingers) I forthwith bade her call together her sloven hussies and make ready for dinner some lamb's fryes and a jugged hare ; likewise, little merrie Andrew I silenced with a sugar popp, and bade him go fetch me from the Duke's Garden a fayre posey of Love-in-idlennesse.

The posture of my affairs at the present time is this : the house hath somewhat suffered since my lord's day from Rack and Ruine, which are twin daughters to Neglect, and it bade fayre to go altogether to the dogges had not the new owner freshly sent hither cunning craftsmen to make good what five and twenty yeeres' abandonment hath undone. The chief change in my family is in my precious son-in-law Dick, or, as he must now be styled, *Richard* Feathergay, the same having experienced Religion and become greatly puffed up over other people's Shortcomings. Wherein he hath picked up the sing-song twang of a snuffling non-conformist, which for our sinnes doth use to be much hereabout, and hath learned Richard many prayerful outpourings and homilies, and hath instructed him, so oft as he should see me take a dram, to heeve an earnest, soul-fetching groan. Likewise hath a change been wrought in my Maudlyn, which, from a gentle-spoken jade, is come to be the shrillest scolding shrew in the Parish, berating Dick and casting the wild days



*"The Wraith of Cliveden Reach."*





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of his youth in his teeth, till none would take such a plucked pullet to have been a guzzling freebooter, and one that loved to chuck every smug-faced Wench under the Chinne.

This very morning met I Feathergay, with his Puritan peaked hatt, as I walked according to my habit around the howse, both within and without, to see if aught were amisse or awry. And in the Duke's Garden, as though it had been a Cloyster, strutted this shallow-pate at his prairs; and forthwith, with many gestures of dispaire, urged he me to mortify the Flesh, for that this coming again of the Wraith could be nought else but an admonition to me to give over my Wickednesse and repent. Yet lent I small heed, for mine eyes lightened on the prospect before me,—the glistening river, and the sweete meadows, and the sun-flecked woods: for I deem it not presumptuous to say that living amid the fayrest beauties of Nature, which lift the thoughts above the dross of Earth, I have caught from them a better inspiration than had my days been spent within the intellectual compasse of some such Diogenes' Tubb as Dick hath builded.

As to this same Wraith, whereof there hath been a surfeit of idle prating in the counties of Bucks and Barks, I perhaps am the only one now living that can tell the story of the pore gyrl when she was in the flesh, and let who will tell the story of her ghaist now that she is dead. And as for the taylor that I am about to declare, ye may know by this token that it be no trumped-up lye: to wit, that there be in this world things so false that Beelzebub himself could not make them true; and again, that there be divers things so true that I wot even the

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angels could not make them false. Wherefore with this prelude, by way of relish, be it said that the only name whereby I knew her was *Mistress Elspeth*, and the sight of her was as sweete as the sound of pipes o'er the braes. Whence she came I know not ; but whither she went I know, for at Whitsuntide that same yeere, 1667, we found her bodye against the eyot in the river, just where the red oleander bends o'er the withies ; her blue eyes, that had been so keen, half open, and her yellow haire daubed with dirt, yet still frized about her eares. Nor need much more be said of her, but that, alack-a-day, she was a giddy thing that came hither with great store of merth, and was mightily perked up with frilles and furbelows and many debonnaire conceits, a honeymooning with my lord, in those brave days when he was passing full of grace and hardihood. Yet might it have made the most churlish Whelp glad to have seen her with my lord when they sauntered down the dene, he doating upon her, and she ever looking on him with Joy. So all went bravely until there came the usual awakening, when she could not endure to play second fiddle to my lady of Shrewsbury, and finding that my lord did but whistle her down the wind she cast herself into the river, leaving her white kirtle where the great gray pollard stands. And it was the only time I ever saw my lord of Buckingham dumbfounded when he beheld his handiwork, and looked upon her soyled bedraggled Bodye.

Often, in these November days of meditative calm, when I behold a stone in the Graveyard, and think that nought else reminds us of the sweete harte we remember, it comes o'er me as passing strange that nor sine nor token of *Mistress Elspeth* remains

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at Cliefden, save only the red oleanders that she planted by the riverside. In the State rooms no single thing speaks of her, nor yet in the room where once she lodged, for even the silk bed is new. Here in the Hall ye may see my lord's strong chest of iron, and in his closet his divination books and cunning tools wherewith he weighed the ayre and such other divvle's trickes. Here, in my lady of Shrewsbury's tyreing chamber, is her patchbox, and casting bottle, and curling tongs, and a damasque screen, embroydered with forget-me-nots, she wrought herself and gave my lord in lasting remembrance of their short-lived love. On yonder table lies a Dice-box that many of the periwigged King's Chessplayers have rattled, and on the wall I hung the rapier that belonged to one of them, though which of their choice and master spirits I know not of a surety, although belike 'twas of the Queen's Rook's pawn, that was the most fantastique coxcombe of them all, and that once borrowed three golden Jacobs of me which he never repayed.

Now all this is beside the mark and concerneth not the matter whereof I addressed myself to write, which is that I lately had great businesse to do in London with the new owner's Agent, and to take note of the friendly way he used me. After I had spent two whole days to even my accounts to him, he, being as it seemed a merrie dogge, bade me to dine with him—not like my she-cozen that is always urging the vertue of hospitality, to the end that she and her sluttish little husband may be fed—but making much of me, yea, more than my deserts. So without further ado dressed I myself in my best cloth suit and a new hatt and buckles to my shoes,

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and went with him to a Tavern called *The Swan with two necks*, which he apprised me was so called because the fare being of the best, people are wont there to eat double their accustomed quantity. Hearing which—whereof in my present sober afterthought I somewhat mistrust—I fell upon the victuals, as Sampson fell upon the Lion and the Beare, and extraordinary good cheere it was. And we had napkins and a change of trenchers which pleased me mightily, and foure dishes were served to a messe, whereat my mouth watered ; but my host sayd it was *a sopp to Cerberus*, which not understanding I did look askance, whereupon he explained these words to be an equivalent to the new French fashion of saying grace. Then the board being dressed and garnished with leeks, eggs and butter, they sett before us toothsome marrow bones, and a great pye of larks, thickly crusted, a steaming chine of prime beef, and a fatt goose well soused. So having made myself abundant elbow room, and bearing in remembrance what had been said of the Two Swans, I cleaned the platter as oft as it was filled, with such fine frenzy as showed me to be no Recreant. And for drink sett they before us a puncheon of Cider and a mighty flagon of Rhenish, after which to finish were millions, all sound, mark you, and burnt clarett sluiced with brandy in pipkins. But Gramercie! what gizzards the Two Swans must have if every one gorges to the muzzle for their sakes! So the feast being ended, mine host did offer to take me to the Playhouse, whither we went, and I was amazed to see how unsteady the streets of London doe be for one that is bred to the country. Now when we were come to the Playhouse, and had escaped the

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brawling of the masterless Rogues at the Dore, we were penned in the pitt, where I marvelled to see the fine ladies that satt in balcones, and which for a pastime did beguile themselves a-trying of their hatts with peals of laughter upon the gallants beside them. Anon we beheld a play by one, Will Shakespere, called the More of Vennis, and a pretty kettle of fish it seemed, though I did have a quiet snooze through the midst and woke only to find that they were still making Ducks and Drakes of one another. So the play being done, we had divers cupps of a strong flavoured decoction called Alicant, and a farce followed wherein a young scapegrace damsel dressed like a milk-mayd, and pretty as a poppy in the rye, sang a song called 'Kerchiefs all askew,' which was the most beautifullest song that ever I heard; though when the shameless jade fell to dancing as nimble and fleet of foot as a Squirrel, I roared for merth till a mannerless ruffler beside me clapp'd his hand upon his sword and with a great oath bade me contain myself or elles go to the welkin and split the trees. So all being over I took a most civil leave, and all would have been well had not some beggar's apprentice contrived in the throng to splitt my coat up behind so that the Tayles hung asunder. Whereupon I would fayne have made shift to fetch a compasse and gain my lodging unnoticed, but it growing a little darkish I missed the way and presently found myself in a narrow street, exceeding filthy, called Drury Lane, where two whispering and giggling gyrls with faces like red pippins mocked and jibed at me, the one crying 'Commether pretty Poll!' whilst the other vowed that her greatest wish in life was to be an old man's darling. But happily coming out upon

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the Strand, I lost them in the presse that followed after a regiment of traynbands, the first that ever I saw in red coats, which came in view amid the glare of torches with spontoons and silken banners, and now and again a clustre of lanthorns by whose light could be seen the gold lace, the glittering bayonets, and the bedraggled plumes.

*Twelfth Day, 1704.*

Yesterday was one of those delectable days when all the world, so far as it lye within the compasse of our vision, doth seem to be at ease. The motionless tree-tops, the calm meadows, and the wreath-crowned hills, seemed all significant of the repose of some power which, let us hope, looks with compassion on our little life wherein troubles come with such stealthy and fateful steps.

I spent the day abroad, not that I am grown a Sluggard, but because Lord Orkney, the new master, being summoned to the warres in the low countries, hath taken Dick Feathergay with him, and since their departure, to-day se'nnight, my Maudlyn hath been in a pettish tosse, chiding all that came within earshot. So in the early morning I strolled forth acrossse the Terrace, and noted that to this day its sward is uneven where the King's Chessplayers fenced with cunning masters imported from abroad, which made a pretence to sell some secret thrust, though I wot there was little they could learn the Chessplayers, who were deft swordsmen, or my lord of Buckingham, which was the nimblest dare-divvle of them all. And I marvelled the first time that ever I saw them sett in what they called their order of battle, which was three or four exercised to con-

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front a common foe, wheeling and changing front like a mimique squadron, which was the posture of my lord of Buckingham and his seconds the day of the duell at Barne Elmes. Likewise on this Terrace satt they often in the afternoons upon a Turkey carpet spread on the grasse, considering of their secret businesse or listening to the expounding by an astrologer of all we know or dreeme, which last they doated on as hartily as the sweetening of a fayre woman's words. And once, when one of them had brought out his lute and played a tinkling minstrelsie, Mistress Elspeth came tripping in her tunique of velvett as light as a thistle blow, and with a mock curtesie raised her coats above her ankles, and danced a Coranto till the Chessplayers clapp'd their hands as pleased as Punch. Only my lord looked on passing sowre, crushing in his fingers a posey of thyme and feverfew, for he would never, as the saying is, that one of his wenches jigg'd to another man's fiddle. But when Mistress Elspeth had made an end, nothing would serve her turn but that she and my lord should Kisse; and when he still seemed something vex't, she took from a great dishe before them an almond, and, holding it between her lips, bade him bite off the end, which my lord merrilie did, albeit at such unseemly antiques methinks a Monkey must have blusht. But the Chessplayers vowed they were true lovers, and rated me as I had been moon-struck to stand gaping, and to bring them no drinke. And I ne'er have forgotten the joy of her laughing eyes that day, and the grace of her quick, briske step in the dance, and the slender gold-bodkin thrust in her haire.

The night before Feathergay left, Maudlyn made



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him a passing good refreshment in the buttery, of a great pan of fryed eels, and a pot wherein were stewing cabobs of mutton with onions and a knuckle of ham, for she doe keep her larders right plenteously stored. And I sett on a goodly tankard of small beer, and a flask of the Rum that Dick cherished of old,—and whether he liked it for old times' sake, or whether a flavour of Dutch courage cometh never amisse, 'twas left at last as dry, so he sayd, as Captain Brand's powder horn. And for a savoury I bethought me of a flich of bacon which my she-cozen sent for a Christmase-gift, but it proved to be all lean gristle, whereat I was wroth. But as for Dick he satt quite silent and wistful, as though musing upon the white crests of sun-flecked breakers and sailing again with Captain Brand upon some new-found sea, which oddly put me in mind of my Lady's Barbary bird that many long yeeres syne was hung o' cold winter nights in that self-same corner, the which, when I lighted my Taper, making ready to begone to bed, did open his eyes and scratch his poll and look at me askance as tho' by that untimely flickering I mocked him with phantasies of sunrise. So our repast would have been passing dull but that Lord Orkney's groom of the horse supped with us, who told me many marvellous things of the warres against the French King : as that we on our side doe sett out a companie of dogges every night without our lines in lieu of Sentries, which are no mannerless cures, but are called every morning by a man with a horn, when they come in very soberly and decently. Further, quoth he, the French have in their army many apes, some serving as buglers, others trayned to handle a musquatoon to admiration,

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which apes are to be distinguished only by their extraordinary gentle manners, so that no dancing master could be a more skittish-leaping gallant than they. But now I must disclose the mischance which befell Dick, whereby it hath come to passe that he hath perforce exchanged the freaques learned him by the Reverend Buffet-the-Tempter Smilie, for the morning draughts and devil-may-care ways of a dragoon.

It happened that last month this same Smilie was minded to make a show of Feathergay's conversion at Battlynge Mead, whither he summoned the village bumpkins and where a pulpitt was sett whence he and Feathergay should snivel and rant as high as they pleased. And beside them I satt, afraid to stay away lest I be held up for a rum-soaked Reprobate, yet loath to come, for that they would be sure to cast a gibe or two at me as one rough-hewn for Purgatory. So the Reverend Smilie began to discourse, and when Feathergay spied me laugh in my sleeve, he cast his eyes aloft and shook his head. But anon, a great burly sun-browned sailor, with his pig-tail knotted in a crimson cord, and in his ears earrings which did not match, and a wadde of tobacco in one cheek, and a bullet in the other to chew upon, stood afar at the edge of the throng and fixed his hard black eyes upon Dick. And I marked that at sight of him Dick satt spell-bound, as one whose hair should presently bristle. And as the Reverend Smilie brought his 'fourthly' to a conclusion, a country lad put into Dick's hand a torn Scroll which ranne thus :—

'Bo'sen Bradawle's service to Master Feathergay able seaman, late of the "Bloody Cain," an' if thou

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come not freshly down from thy roost, Rogue, an' give me the wherewithal, by the black flag of Captain Brand he'll break his head first, and expose him for a cut-throat knave thereafter.'

Which paper I plucked from the ground when it fell, while Feathergay satt as one with a Palsy, till the stranger pushing his way to the empty pulpitt remarked that he would show how to heeve a shot 'twixt wind and water, and whilst they all stood agog, he without further ado fell to reciting a sort of ill-flavoured doggerel that had a rattletrap catch to it somewhat after this wise :—

'Twas aboard the Bloody Cain, crewsing off the Coast of Spayne  
That we laughed for glee to sight the Silver Fleete,  
And 'twas there that Captain Brand, with the black flag in's hand,  
Doffed his hatt untill its feather swept his feete.  
Then a great ship by the name of the Holy Oriflame,  
With two galleons fell aboard us, flank to flank,  
And we fought them one to three, till their bludd bestreaked  
the Sea,  
And we filled our hold with Siller 'ere they sank !

The lusty caitiff, chewing his bullet and tobacco the while, was going on with his sing-song, when all the folk ran aglee with cudgels and battoons, and with a clashing like the din of a Beare-Garden, which forced him to give over, and they would have trounced him out of his wits had not he slipped through their fingers like a greased Pig and made off with Dick at his heels. And the Reverend Buffet-the-Tempter Smilie standing in the presse was struck o' the nose with a brickbat which laid him flat, and being lifted to his feete again all mudd behind, and dashed with his own gore in front, it verily appeared as though he and Beelzebub had fought amain

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together and the Evil One had given him blow for blow. But as for me, I chuckled to myself, for a Catt, saith the adage, will be a Catt still, and I had always mistrusted the Reverend Smilie's groanings and snuffings to be of that virtue which a clipp'd shilling will buy. And when I got home, there was presently a great outcry in the buttery, and there found I the payre—Dick and the pirate Bo'sen—hobnobbing over lobsouse, cheese, and a great horn of Hollands: but one of the mayds having come in with a dish of buttered pease, the Rogue fell to tickling her, till she, being unused to such diversion, did give him a wipe and lett fall her dish with such hullabaloo as brought me and my Maudlyn upon the scene, whereupon the sailor made off and Maudlyn rated Dick for a hang-dogge crest-fallen woe-begone ne'er-do-well till the sorry Wretch was fayne to cry for quarter. But the report of Dick's discomfiture at Battlynge Mead being greatly noised abroad by all the old jokers betwixt Maydenhead and Cookham, it finally reacht Lord Orkney's eares, who declared that Featheryay was clearly better fitted to ride a charger than to mount a pulpitt, and incontinently shipp'd him to the Hague.

It hath been well affirmed that speaking of one matter brings another to mind. And thus Maudlyn's rating of pore Dick recalled to me as I satt that evening before the kitchin embers something which made me laugh, albeit some may say scarce honestly. But let my Critiques beare in mind that these things happened five and thirty yeeres ago.

Whilst filling of my pipe and musing how old age dozes by the fyre whilst youth makes love, I fell to thinking of a certain tiring mayd, one Harriott

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Dimchurch, which Mistress Elspeth brought with her to Cliefden, of whom I will hold it against any man that she was a lissom, clean-limbed wench as ever jigged about a Maypole. And whereas she found it lonesome and passing dull amongst strangers, I brought her to gossip in the buttery, beguiling an howre with such dainties as cherries and cream, or a cupp of sack. And one afternoon, she sitting alone with me, and the howse being quiet, my lord conjuring with his alchemical bottles, and Mistress Elspeth tuning a new Italian lute, I made bold to learn her a foolish pastime called 'Mending Laura's laces,' whereof, as it is known to all, I need make no lengthy dissertation. And the hussie proving nowise backward, the frolique was at its highest, with divers droll conceits, when of a sudden the dore opened, and in stepped Mistress Elspeth. And she chid us mighty fierce, albeit her mischievous eye twinkled, and she commanded me with an oath to betake myself incontinently to my lord and declare to him what manner of hay I had been making.

Whereat I could scarce dissemble a smile, for 'twas my lord that did compose that frivolous catch the Chessplayers sang, whose burthen was '*Mending Laura's laces all the day.*'

*Candlemasse, 1704.*

I found a batt in the Hall the other morning neare the foot of the great stayre-case, and knowing this must surely be the fore-runner of ill-tidings, was not greatly astonished when they presently told me my she-cozen and her little lop-eared Terrier of a husband were coming from Windsor to spend the day. Whereat I might have grumbled, but that



*"The Wraith of Cliveden 'Reach.'"*



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Maudlyn reminded me that for decency's sake I must keepe fayre with them. Now I knew as well as Peter knew a cock-crow that she was coming to give me good reason why those fifty pieces-of-eight borrowed of me cannot be repayed, and that she will be always crying up some things she hath to sell, the upshot whereof is that the businesse of my money do still hang in the hedge. So for a satyr upon them, it being a Friday, made I ready the meanest fasting dinner ever seen upon Earth since the widow's handful of meal in a Barrel. And the glummost of Old Noll's Ironsides would have laughed to see how sullen she eyed the victuals and how her husband satt as tongue-tied as any Quaker. So when by way of table-talk I told her of Dick's having gonne to the warres and that some day he would come back with a bag of doubloons, she answered something tartly that she doubted of his bringing back so much as a cobbler's whistle. Moreover, her little red-nosed husband averred that it runneth not in the Deepegrove blood or kinship to be mighty men of battle, and reminded me that mine honest uncle Prudent Deepegrove, now in Paradise, who hath been the chief campaigner of our name, was wont to be more frightened than hurt—excepting once when by ill-luck he thrust the poynt of his great sword into his great toe, or again, before Naseby, when as he lay asleep in the sun a tent-pole blown by the wind smote him right sore so that he could not sitt with ease for as much as a week thereafter.

Then the talk turning upon other matters, they told me it is commonly reported that the Wraith hath appeared three times : once in the gloaming, in the avenue of trees at the Whyte Place, a faint pale



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figure in the starlight that walkes up and down beneath the Elmes wringing its hands ; and again as though a graven image had been sett like a shining light in the great pollard at whose foot we found Mistress Elspeth's kirtle, the face of the image being wondrous like and the head turned a' one side as she lay drowned ; and lastly on the Honeymoon Walk, not far from the Wanton's Bowre, when it passed like a will-o'-the-wisp over last year's leaves and was gone. Now these be but empty Bubbles that whosoever will may leave or take ; but of the great dogge which always followed her told I them somewhat which made little merrie Andrew shout for merth.

It chanced that one day in the Autumn of 1666, my lord and Mistress Elspeth being then at Cliefden, and the howse just finished, they were minded to ride for their diversion through Maydenhead thicket to Twyford. And behind them I followed, and after me a couple of armed fellowes, and before us ranne the great dogge. Now at Maydenhead there is an hostelrie known to this day by the name of the Beare, for that in those times the landlord, being a shrewd man, kept a Beare which every afternoon would fall to dancing, with many fond antiques, on the green behind the howse, either alone or with whoever chused. And the Beare could jigge with the best, or dance the Brantle or the Barley Break, and all quite solemn, with his snout in the ayre, like a Roundhead making ready to put up a Psalm. And multitudes came to behold the dancing Beare, and their Thirst must needs be slaked, whereby the host drew in a great store of pence, aye, and of sixpence.

Now it happened as we rode by the dogge spied

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the Beare, which just then danced a Spanish gavotte, and neither for command, nor oath, nor crack of whip would the dogge tarry, but with a hungry Lust sprang he through the midst of the revelling and fastened his teeth in the Beare's haunch. Whereat to every one's amaze the Beare began to scream and swear in French, '*Morfandiou!*' and '*Ventre-Saint-gris,*' making more noise than a Billingsgate fishwife; and it did a bodye's harte good to see how my lord and Mistress Elspeth laughed till they almost cried. Wherefore the Beare proved to be none other than a Frenchman, which, having gotten down in the world, had hit upon this scheme to retrieve his fortunes. And that night he vanished, taking with him a bag of shillings which lay in the secret Till, and mine host had the Beare's hide stuffed with strawe and sett before his howse for a sine.

Now as to this Honeymoon Walk, 'twas a lover's retreat where my lord and Mistress Elspeth trysted, though it is so called only these last few yeers, my Maudlyn having in an idle moment so named it in remembrance of them and the word having stuck, as such fond nick-names may sometimes doe. And I remember one Summer's morning, the day before Mistress Elspeth passed to her rest, one of the Chess-players—the King's Knight it was, whom later we knew so tragically as the Duke of Monmouth—being come on a weighty errand from Whytehall, it behooved me to find my lord forthwith. Whereupon I rightly guessed that he and Mistress Elspeth might be at the Honeymoon Walk, where they so loved to dally; and strange it was that it should be there, where they had spent so many glad howres together, that their howse of cards came tumbling

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about their eares. For albeit I am no Eavesdropper, I could not but heare their voices, my lord saying, 'Tush, gyrl, who cares a groat for thy words!' and she, with a passionate flush on her cheek, hectored him and vowed that she would make ready a silken halter wherewith he should hang either her or my lady of Shrewsbury, as he listed. And as I drew neere, I saw that at her feete lay the great dogge which gnawed a bone, and they stood at a spot where the trees have been felled, whence you may look down the river to the sedge-grass upon the eyots where the fuller had his fulling-ground and acrossse to the flower-strewn apple orchard of Babham. And the sougling of the breeze bore its soft drowsy lullaby, and my lord sought to sweeten her with fayre words ; but she, standing in the sunshine, fell to weeping, and I knew that the fatt was in the fyre. And sometimes to this day, on Summer mornings, when the dew lyeth upon the tulips and the bright light strikes athwart them, I seem to behold in them again the semblance of Mistress Elspeth, standing in the sunshine, red and defiant amid a sprinkling of tears. But at the moment, as my lord turned heart-sick from her, she spoke these boding words, very soft and with exceeding earnestness, which struck a chill upon me :—

'Love whom you will, and love many, but so long as the breeze whispers in the tree-tops, or birds continue to fill the summer air with song—me you shall never forget. Though sometimes in the bright sunshine you may forget that I am dead, and in fancy stray with me pleasantly again through these sweete places . . . and, verily, I shall be neere.'

Now, these be solemn words, that bespeake a

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coming again or haunting in the spirit, albeit in love and not in wrath, as learned men would declare. And sometimes when my lord went out to stroll in the glad meadows, while the breeze whispered in the rustling tree-tops, and the red-breasts filled the ayre with thrilling melody, I wondered if something might faintly remind him of Mistress Elspeth, and place her blithly as of old by his side ; or if, when the sun sank blood-red in a grey mist, leaving far above a fleecy line of shining clouds—which merrie Andrew saith are angells' outstretched wings—he ever thought of the fond harte he had cast away. And standing now, grey and old, in these self-same places, with the humming-birds tasting the sweete-briar, and the Squirrels peeping from the delicious dark of the walnutt shade, and my life that seems so little longer than a night of troubled dreemes behind me, I will confesse that if my lord had a fault it was to be overmuch in love with himself ; and if he had a second fault it was a too surpassing fondnesse for these mad-freaked honeymoons.

During these last fifteen yeeres, since the times whereof I have spoken, I have been left almost alone at Cliefden with Maudlyn and Dick and merrie Andrew. And my delight hath been, my duty done, to spend many mornings and afternoons in the woods, whether at the Wanton's Bowre, or the Honeymoon Walk, or amid the groves beyond the dene. And looking back, I draw such comfortable thoughts from those woodland howres, that I conceive them to have been, perhaps, the most profitably spent part of my life ; and it is a regret, now that my days are drawing to a close, that I did not devote more of them to the contemplation of the repose and truth of Nature. If

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some Caviller shall ask what one may see in the forest aisles and their aspiring tree-tops and deepe darkes of shade and in the slanting scatter-gold shafts of sunshine, I can but answer that a man only sees and heeres the things his soul hath compasse to receive. For my own part, there seems to be more than a commonplace admonition in the sound of a Woodpecker tapping, and I never could mark the intense silence of the woods, by contrast with man's little noyse, without emotion. I know not if there be a loftier aspiration than to see far down the greenwood a sunbeam strike a sky-swung Branch, but it seems unlikely that any man was ever born so dull of comprehension that the showre of falling Autumn leaves, and the memories which kindle their fyres in the starlight, say nothing to him.

It needs no Solomon to know, when the brimming flagon of life runs dry, that the dregs thereof are 'Vanity'; yet in the retrospect of a dramatique half centurie, musing of curious secrets and of remembered friendships and sweethartes, give me leave to say, masters, that the twilight of my life is slipping peacefully and happily away.

On many a quiet morning I have delighted in the motley garb of the trees, their russet stains, the mosses finer than old wine to smelle—and even the great weather-beaten logge which seems felled a-purpose for whoever would sitt at ease and watch the sheen of the river. From thence you may see the fatt-lands of Battlynge Mead, where the beastes feed contentedly, not repining at their lott, nor peevish that it be not Springtime all their lives, nor yett bemoaning their sinnes. And here, in the midst of these fayre scenes, where the very stones speak eloquently of lives and

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loves bygone, I wonder little there should be a ghaist by Night, for by Day the woods and walks are peopled with memories and haunting dreemes.

In my untutored infancy I leaped for Joy the first time that ever I beheld the sunshine sparckling upon the Thames at London Bridge, for to my chyldish fancy it seemed a thread from Earth to Heaven—or as a promise of those yeeres to come, which to the young are always beautiful and always far away. And for a twelvemonth, being a lad grown, I cherished the memorie of some roses trelliced about the Porch on my uncle Prudent Deepegrove's cottage, whither I went one Maytime, care-free and whistling throo' the fyeldes. Those flowres climbed to my window, bringing with them the ecstacie and perfectness of life, and sometimes after I wondered whether, when all the shocks and griefs of maturity were spent, I might return to that humble habitation, and find again those first incomparable roses of my youth.

And passing strange it is that here at Cliefden I seem to have recovered them again after all these storm-tost yeeres, though now they are of the retrospect with a rare and subtle brilliance beyond the bloom of Earth. And here, too, is again the sparckle of sunshine upon the river transfigured in an old man's communing. And thus it comes to passe that sometimes when the sunset fades, and the twilight darkens, and we bid *good-night*, the thought steals o'er me like a benediction that perhaps hereafter, in the awakening of a perfect sunrise, it may be that some of those whom I have loved upon Earth shall meet me and bid me—*good-morning!*

## UNDER THE BLACK FLAG

IN November 1700, at the season of reddening leaves, the Anglo-Dutch colony of New York experienced a sharp emotion on learning that the pirate sloop of Captain Kidd, with that redoubtable rogue and his cut-throat crew on board, had cast anchor in the incomparable beauty and the autumnal pathos of their midst. The famous freebooter's story was well known on Manhattan Island, whence five years before he had sailed for England to assume command of the *Adventure* galley. His lapse from the duty of a constable sent to suppress piracy on the high seas to the ways of those he was intended to punish was town talk. Moreover, a whisper of the pending fate that awaited him had come from Boston, and the rumour had gone through Broadway and the Bowling Green and Wall Street that a letter commanding his immediate presence before Governor Bellamont had been received. Those of the inhabitants who were sufficiently unsophisticated to look for a great vessel flaunting the death's head and bones were surprised at the small, high-pooped, peaceable-seeming craft that lay under the guns of Fort James, with the English flag at her peak, and a dozen sailors tidying her deck and touching her sable sides with paint and making her rigging as taut as a spider's web. Those

who went to the shore for a scrutinising peep at the stranger found material for much moralising even in the deceitfulness of the new-comer's guileless appearance, which, as the Dominie declared, was but the inevitable worldly mask upon man's iniquity,—a hopeful sentiment to which his flock added sundry homilies suggested by the old gibbet that stood near the river, and which seemed to point with ominous intention at the cutter.

At the commencement of the eighteenth century Manhattan Island retained much of the Dutch imprint it had received from the founders of New Amsterdam. Its lower extremity was covered with gabled and peak-roofed houses, placed endwise upon the streets, which, unpaved, unlighted and uncleaned, differed little from country roads. The centre of the island had been cleared and ploughed, and here, in those mellow November days, were stacks of ripe corn and heaps of golden pumpkins, and, at wide intervals, thatched farmhouses, fringed in summer with tulips and sweet peas and sunflowers; while beyond, towards Spuyten Duyvel, stretched a forest of grand old spreading trees, unchanged since Hendrick Hudson first sighted them. Northward extended the river to which he gave his name, the 'long house' of the Iroquois, the high, sun-flushed crags of the palisades sloping towards the hills behind Weehawken; to the south lay the Atlantic, whence, through the Narrows, came invigorating breaths of salt air; and on the eastern side, connecting the harbour with Long Island Sound, lay a strip of water which, at its most tortuous point, seethed and eddied amid dangerous rocks, making a narrow way which the cautious Dutch navigators named *Hell Gate*.



Over the dreamy repose of the scene lay the opalescent sunlight and liquid haze of Indian summer, touching the woods with the scarlet of sumach branches, the amber of the maple, the feathery shafts of yellow willow—as though the trees were shot with tongues of flame that had set their foliage ablaze.

Among those whom the presence of the cutter drew to the river came two young women, both good-looking and well-dressed. Arrived at the water's edge, they gazed for a moment in silence at the sloop resting placidly at anchor—a spectacle whose tranquillity seemed to irritate the elder of them.

‘A plague upon me for a fool,’ she muttered, with eyes fixed upon the vessel, ‘to think that a pirate could have time for aught else than to be fingering and gloating over his booty!’

‘But,’ exclaimed her companion, whose quick ear had caught the half-spoken words, ‘the Captain has been busy with the notables. It has been a stream of boats plying to and fro; and the first I saw going this morning to that pretty ship were Rem Rapalye and Rip Van Dam, and it must be urgent need that sets them afoot before breakfast.’

‘A lady's letter takes precedence of all Rapalyes and Van Dams,’ was the tart reply. ‘Could he not at least have had the civility to send an answer?’

‘If he be still the sensible man we took him for,’ rejoined the other, ‘and not the scapegrace people say, he will know that his answer is best delivered in person. Only think of all the pleasant words he has to say; and how could he put upon paper the feelings with which he will approach your presence after seeing nothing for three years but negroes and sirens and other like monsters of land and sea?’

‘You are nearer right than wrong, Amanda,’ complacently answered the widow Mietjen, whose vanity was not proof against this substantial albeit equivocal compliment. ‘The yacht gives small sign of life : we will return whence we came, and let him take his time. Stay ! Yonder are the worthies you just named, Rem Rapalye and Rip Van Dam—as heartless a pair of usurers as ever trod the streets of Leyden.’

‘Yes, and they pause to speak to the Dominie ; he was here yesterday at sunrise to see the sloop cast anchor, muttering and mumbling to himself the while. Now they have noticed us : they leave the Dominie and come this way.’

In her prime, Diana Mietjen, an English girl who had married a Dutchman, had been a handsome woman. It was her habit from an early age to divide the small fraction of mankind that came within her horizon into two categories—the men whom she would be willing to marry, and nonentities. She had laid successful siege to the departed Mietjen, and had made him a good wife, of the frugal and thrifty type ; and now, having completed her thirty-fifth year, was prepared to venture again upon the connubial state.

The two men who now approached, wearing the sombre garb and broad-brimmed hat of the Dutch burghers, were such staunch friends, and had such lucrative interests in common, that quarrelling never estranged them. They were disciples of the popular school of philosophy that every one who differed from themselves was mistaken ; and they would sit for hours on a porch in summer, or in winter by the crackling fireside, bickering over their business, which both declared was going to the dogs, or

vehemently discussing the rights and wrongs of the infant colony, or the true and only doctrine of the Reformed Church, and exhausting the vocabulary of the Dutch language so far as expletives are to be found in that tongue. Even in heated moments neither took offence, for their phrases were so long that the listener, try as he might, could scarcely carry the sense of a sentence from beginning to end.

They saluted the widow with effusive greeting, Van Dam casting upon her a look of undisguised admiration, while Rapalye glanced at a copper time-piece he drew from his fob, remarking, with a twitch of the head habitual to him, 'A fortunate chance indeed, good madam, that we meet you; since Captain Kidd, whose coming we await, has named two o'clock as the hour, and your house as the place, wherein he will anon converse with us.'

'I expect the Captain this afternoon,' replied Dame Mietjen, with an air of surprise; 'but I knew not that the public service brought him to my door, nor that such worthy company was to meet him.'

'The public service requires little, either from the Captain or from us,' gravely answered Van Dam; 'nevertheless we are to join him presently, by your leave, in that cosy parlour, where I warrant a good fire is blazing; yet I marvel that the Captain, although an old friend of yours and of ours, should have made so bold. Friendship is a skittish beast, and must not be ridden without a saddle.'

'But how comes it that you are awaiting him here, if your trysting-place be at my house?'

Before the answer could be uttered a light footfall was heard, and an individual appeared whom all recognised, albeit since they had seen him the sun of

distant seas had bronzed his fine young face, and a five years' cruise as one of Captain Kidd's lieutenants had given him a mature look and a more settled air of command than is often seen in a man of eight-and-twenty. The new-comer was so absorbed by the blooming widow and her rosy step-daughter as to bestow but slight notice upon Rapalye and Van Dam, and it might have puzzled a keener observer than they to determine which of the women received the greater share of his civilities. But, in truth, the delight with which he gazed upon the widow was only a reflected joy. He and Amanda had become great friends during his sojourn at New York in happy days gone by. She had taken him to church, where the Dominie preached of love, who, being a man greatly enamoured of himself, held forth with unusual unction. After service they had walked to the Battery, whence they looked upon foaming waves and circling sea-gulls, and gazed up the sunny, slumbrous valley of the Hudson, with its stately oaks and dense sedges, where the wood-pigeons and wild ducks thronged. She had even cooked for him, with her own plump hands, some indigestible doughnuts, which were heavier than the cheeses wherewith a Dutch captain short of cannon-balls once loaded his carronades. One Sunday afternoon he had invited her to a stroll up the Bouwerie, just beyond sound of the church bells; but, as this was through secluded glades, favoured by engaged couples or by newly married ones, the coy maiden had declined. At parting, five years before, in the garden, out of sight behind the arbour, he had kissed her, at which she had sprung from his arms and run into the house. Now all these amenities were at an end. She had been

severely brought up to believe that wise men are honest, and that theft is folly as well as crime. But here was her handsome Bendthebow come back to her with the shadow of the black flag darkening his life ; and how, according to fixed Dutch tenets, could she love a man who was both fool and knave ?

Their first greetings, inclusive of things from the South Sea to Sandy Hook, subsided, and the lieutenant begged Dame Mietjen with so significant a look to return to the house that the quick-witted lady divined something more than ordinary. The lieutenant saluted the two Dutch worthies, and without more ado offered his arm to the widow, and, followed by Amanda, turned towards Broadway.

‘Dear Lieutenant Bendthebow,’ began the lady, as soon as they were out of earshot, ‘you shall sup with us. Mercy, how tall you have grown ! And that white scar !—a cutlass stroke, was it ? You looked at me so meaningly just now that I read in your eyes you are no less a rogue than before.’

‘I looked with intention to let you understand that some one awaits you.’

‘At my house ? Who can it be ?’

‘Who should it be but Captain Kidd ?’

‘What, while we were looking for him at the landing ? How did he pass unseen ? And those two brave men we left waiting. No matter : let us hurry on.’

A few steps farther—for distances were not great in colonial New York—brought them to the widow’s house, standing with its picturesque chimney-stack on Broadway, while the side, or more properly the front, opened upon a tiny garden, with sun-dial, and cherry trees, and an arbour, beside which a great cluster of

crimson dahlias still bloomed. The pride of the Mietjen family, however, was not in its garden, but in its house, which was an old Dutch cottage, built in the days of Petrus Stuyvesant, of bricks imported from Rotterdam, and with an ancient brass knocker, and diamond-paned windows, and a formidable scraper. Within was a spacious room, furnished with a carved chest, and dining-table, spinning-wheel, a solemn-looking portrait of the defunct Mietjen, a sideboard with plated tea-things and blue crockery, and half a dozen cosy chairs in the deep window or before the polished andirons.

It was in this room—'the bower of the adorable Diana,' as he was wont to term it—that Captain Kidd awaited her arrival. At that moment he was particularly appreciative of its snug interior, as contrasted with the high seas he had left on the Atlantic. He had hung his three-cornered hat on his sword in a corner, and, unbuttoning the lapel of his blue coat, seated himself contentedly in a rocking-chair and cocked one foot over his knee in navy fashion. He was past forty, clean shaven, with sandy hair growing thin at the sides, bright grey eyes, speaking with the Scotch accent of his native Greenock, of good manners and frank address, and as thorough a seaman as ever crossed the line. Like many of his betters at that happy epoch, he was a free liver, drinking bumpers at dinner, and sometimes, in the privacy of his closet, putting his lips to the bottle. He was a man of robust health, and usually of such quick and keen perception that Darby Mullins, his gunner and devoted admirer, who afterwards enjoyed the honour of being hung in his company, said that at a mile's distance the Captain could tell a male from a female dog simply

by the bark. For many years he had lived in New York during the intervals of his cruises, and it was there that he had married Sarah Oort, widow of one of his fellow-officers, in whom he had found not a mate, but a master. A practical housewife was the trumpet-toned Sarah, for ever counting eggs and paring apples, scolding her two maids the livelong day, and rating the baker that sold light loaves, and the butcher whose meat was gristle, and the dairyman whose milk was water, and the neighbours whose faults were many, and the Captain himself for an idle ne'er-do-weel that would end in the workhouse if he did not die in the pillory. Hour after hour, from morn till night, went on that ceaseless invective, until the tireless tongue stopped at nine o'clock, when all virtuous people in the colony retired to rest. Hence it came that, during his visits ashore, the Captain, though no novice at a brawl, sometimes showed the white feather and slunk back to his ship. On this occasion the good wife, finding her poor opinion of her husband justified by the sinister sayings that were in the air, received him with so strident a welcome of abuse that he had incontinently fled, with the admission to himself that nothing short of a double decker's broadside would drown that formidable voice. And yet Kidd, sitting in the adorable Diana's cosy parlour, and ruminating over his reception that morning and upon the storm his plunderings had raised, with his brain filled and fired with a vast scheme, found time to let his thoughts wander to bygone days, years and years ago, when his tameless shrew was the bride of another—a slip of a girl, with fine fresh face and sentimental eyes and soft musical voice. 'How people change!' thought the Captain

—‘more even than the inanimate things whereof the years make havoc.’ Would he have done better had he remained at Greenock and married Maggie Brae, with her bare feet and honest blue eyes and dimpled chin and the milk can on her head? He had never expected to see her after the twilight evening they sat as lad and lassie by the roadside, with the lights of Greenock before them, and the ship on which he should sail at anchor in the Clyde;—and to think that they should have met twenty years afterwards on the deck of his first prize the *Quedah Merchant*, where Maggie stood, barefoot still, by the side of her husband the skipper!

Dame Mietjen consoled him for his discomfiture with cold meats, excellent Hollands, and fragrant coffee sweetened with a stick of sugar-candy. She was resolved, if the Captain’s wife some day choked herself with rage, to be the second Mrs. Kidd. Lieutenant Bendthebow discreetly waited outside in the garden, and to Amanda’s eyes looked so lonesome, that she took compassion and carried him a plate of those same tough doughnuts, and lingered to listen to his explanation that he had known nothing of the secret purpose of the cruise about which so many awkward things were said until he found himself under the black flag. And as the recital was long, they sat down side by side in the arbour, and Amanda promised, after much coaxing, to take him to church again some Sunday, after he was clear of all reproach, and possibly might be prevailed on to walk again as far as the Battery. ‘For, after all,’ said this sensible girl to herself, ‘what avails the opinion of the world against the judgment of one’s own conscience!’ When Rip



Van Dam and Rem Rapalye—‘dot and carry one,’ as Kidd called them—arrived, they were closeted alone with him, while the widow was busy in the kitchen making ready something savoury for supper ; and still Bendthebow talked on, and still Amanda listened, with no change except that, by some odd accident, the lieutenant was holding her hand in his.

Indoors the crackling wood fire sank while Kidd and the Dutchmen talked with intent faces, their voices now raised in passionate altercation, now hushed to a whisper. If there was a halter making ready at Tyburn for one of the trio, the two others looked as uncomfortable as if they feared a similar descent of Justice upon them. Kidd’s proposal, which he had broached the day before, was as follows :—

The colony of New Amsterdam had passed thirty-six years previously from the Dutch to the English flag. It was still, notwithstanding the nominal change, a Dutch settlement. The population was twenty to one. It was unprotected, save by a stockaded fort, half-armed and garrisoned by fifty men. ‘By a Heaven-sent chance,’ exclaimed the Captain in his eagerness, ‘there did not happen to be a single English vessel in the harbour. To let such an opportunity pass, he vowed, would be slighting the proffered blessings of Providence. In its defenceless situation, why might not the colony be seized by a bold stroke and restored to the House of Orange? When asked for the details of this hazardous scheme, the pirate waxed eloquent. On board his cutter were twenty-five resolute fellows, daring and skilful fighters every one. Rip Van

Dam and Rem Rapalye were the oracles of the Dutch settlers, and had but to arouse the patriotic spirit of their townsmen in the name of long pipes and liberty. Kidd asked for only a hundred well-armed young men. These commanded by Darby Mullins would overawe the town with a semblance of authority, while he, with his cutter's crew, surprised the fort at daybreak and put all within to the sword. To this his listeners discovered several obstacles. Had he considered how many weeks would be required to make all clear to the methodical intellect of their compatriots? Again, he spoke of a surprise at dawn. Would it be possible to get their young men breeched, loaded, and primed at so unconscionable a time? or, when once in the field, could they be kept awake? Kidd derided these and weightier objections. For himself he asked nothing—except the governorship of the town pending aid and orders from Holland; and he pledged himself to hold it for ninety days against all comers. His swift cutter would bear the great news across the Atlantic, and a couple of Dutch ships and a company of Brabant soldiers would be with them ere that time was out, or ere England could know what had happened. A criminal at bay is apt to be in bitter earnest, and the fated Captain, being resolved to stake all upon a single desperate cast, was plausible and persuasive.

Looking back upon the interval between that time and this, the mind is dazzled to think how vastly the course of history might have been changed had the Dutch availed themselves of his offer and risked their necks with his. But it was not to be. Kidd cared nothing for broad-bottomed breeches, nor ever smoked a Delft pipe. In default of these qualifica-

tions the good burghers could only view him by the light of his recent exploits and judge him to be a scheming and reckless adventurer. And so it came about that, after trembling for a moment in the balance, one of the boldest conceptions of those storm-tossed days passed still-born from among the things of earth. The discussion drew to a close, when a violent knock at the front door was heard, and a postboy entered with a second missive from Governor Bellamont, which he had been trying to deliver first at the Captain's house, where Mrs. Kidd greeted him with a bucket of scalding water, and later alongside the cutter, whose bo'sen swore he would souse him overboard if he came within reach. Kidd read the letter and crumpled it without a word. It was a summons to surrender himself at Boston within one week, or be outlawed. The Dutchmen judged the letter by its effect, and drew their own conclusions.

Amanda would have lingered longer with the persuasive lieutenant, but when half an hour had passed discretion reminded the girl of her duties, and she left him alone with his plate of untasted doughnuts. And soon afterwards the widow Mietjen came upon him with such intensity of purpose in her handsome face, that, looking up abruptly, the lieutenant knew not whether it was his good or his evil genius that had taken him thus suddenly unawares.

'Poor fellow!' she murmured, in a voice filled with romantic interest: 'it is fate, an inexorable fate, that calls you to a stern and perhaps tragic destiny.'

'Zounds, madam!' exclaimed Bendthebow, start-

ing to his feet at these sinister words, 'this greeting is less sweet than some I have heard you bestow.'

She brushed his impatience aside with a quiet gesture, and motioned him to a seat.

'Can you suppose,' she asked, with profound earnestness, 'that I could waste the moments that remain to us in idle greetings? Do you think there is in me nothing that responds to great purposes, to danger, to the possibilities of the future,—to love?'

'To love!' echoed Bendthebow, as much astonished at her earnestness as at her pointed use of the word.

'Yes,—love. Be it in the past, the present, or the future, the one thing to which all else gives way.'

'With you,' observed the lieutenant, feeling himself on critical ground, 'love is a thing that lives in the retrospect.'

'Ay, truly,' ejaculated the widow, with quick assent. 'It lives in my past, it speaks to me in my present, it points my way through years to come. Can you comprehend this riddle?'

'No;—unless it be that our feelings and the circumstances which govern them are often beyond understanding.'

'To me half my life is beyond understanding, and you would think so if I told it you!'

'I have heard many strange things these last three years,' replied the pirate, with good-nature: 'perhaps you can tell me something stranger than them all.'

The fair Diana settled herself demurely, and with so self-satisfied an air that one might have imagined she had attained the first point aimed at.

'I will tell you my story,' she answered, after a

moment's reflection; 'and I will begin by asking you a question which you need not answer until you have heard me to the end: is there any way by which wrong can become right?'

'My married life lasted only five years, and in that happy time I often asked myself—if the charm of a maiden tie be broken, can a new love be found equal to the old? or do accents once familiar become so hallowed that none other can replace them? And when my beloved husband passed away, I cried aloud to myself, "How often through the long days to come shall I dwell upon the delightful links of sympathy that joined us!" I felt that through all my widowhood the accustomed presence would often seem to be near. "And herein," I sobbed, "shall be my new love—the love of my girlhood rekindled and kept ever young." And—can you believe it, dear Lieutenant Bendthebow?—that fantastic desire has been more than realised. Though to all appearance solitary, I have never felt alone, for my heart has been filled, and beside me stood a guardian angel. For years I have lived in constant fellowship with a beneficent spectre. Many a summer's afternoon have I spent sitting upon one side of yonder porch, imagining my husband seated as of old before me. Can you imagine the weird enchantment of such an attuned communing, or is it possible that a rarer and purer influence should be spread upon our earthly nature than the spiritual encouragement of our earthly love translated and transfigured?'

'Egad, madam,' broke in the lieutenant, slapping his knee with an irreverent chuckle, 'twere not easy to find a more harmonious household than yours.'

'Harmonious in the sense of companionship,—

and yet, dear Horace,' added the lady, drawing imperceptibly nearer, 'I have never till now been able to accept the advice my beloved Mietjen is perpetually pressing upon me.'

'And what may that advice be?' inquired Bendthebow; for the widow paused as if expecting the question.

'How shall I do so much as whisper it?' was the coy response.

'Has it to be whispered?' ejaculated the lieutenant, with an uncomfortable misgiving.

'He is continually urging me to make some other man as happy as I made him,' said the widow, raising her eyes to observe the effect of her words; then, perceiving that, unless the amiable pirate's hesitation were at once overcome, she would meet with an evasion more or less direct, she resolved upon the instant to carry him by storm.

'Do you divine now, dearest Horace?' she exclaimed, clasping her white hands imploringly, 'what I mean by a wrong made right? Can you see with me the happy future that opens before us in this quiet home? Do you understand that for you it means security from every peril that now threatens? It is so fair a prospect that I have brought myself to contemplate it with unalloyed contentment, seeing that we should not, after the world's bad, everyday fashion, be making right wrong, but changing the wrong of your past life to the right that yet may be.'

Bendthebow regarded her fixedly as she ceased speaking, with scant token in his calm face of the lover's beaming joy she awaited. His eyes, indeed, twinkled for a moment at the picture of the departed

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Mietjen urging his widow to bestow herself upon another, but his face hardened with the thought that there are few things cheaper the wide world over than a woman offering herself. If ever in the past he had cast an admiring glance upon the buxom Diana, if ever in delicious musings upon the future he had joined her fate with his, the avowal she had made severed in an instant the thread which might have united their lives.

Nevertheless he was instinctively too gallant not to recoil from the refusal that trembled upon his lips, and it was with an emotion of profound relief that he welcomed the interruption which suddenly burst upon them of a frightened post-boy kicked out of the house, with Kidd after him, stamping and swearing down the garden walk, with cocked hat jammed askew and hands busy buckling on his sword. Seeing at a glance that something of momentous import had happened, Bendthebow followed his chief toward the river without another word.

At midnight a sullen and angered ship's company on board Kidd's sloop softly prepared to heave anchor, drop a few hundred yards down the Hudson, pull softly past Fort James, and then, hoisting jib and mainsail, stand up the East River. The Captain was despondent over his failure with the Dutchmen. Bendthebow was nowise disposed to sail away from Amanda; those of the crew who had set foot ashore had been regarded with such aversion that, as one of them remarked, it made the rum taste sour; moreover, for two days past every soul had been living face to face with a ghastly apprehension. They had played fast and loose, and who could say, if their sanguinary

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escapade were taken seriously and their misdeeds exposed, what a judge and jury might think of them?

The Captain served out a dram to every man—even to Darby Mullins, who was already tipsy—swallowed a bumper himself, and made ready for a night's work. The cabin in which he seated himself for a look at the chart of Hell Gate was not the sumptuous saloon in which pirates are supposed to skim the sea. It was small, and so low that one could barely stand in it erect; lighted at night by a single swinging lamp, and by day through two little stern windows; with no other furniture than a berth at each side, a stationary table, half a dozen lockers, a case of nautical instruments, and some swords and pistols against a stanchion. Toilet arrangements there seemed to be none, and the probability is that the gallant Captain depended largely upon the rain to wash his face. When the door was open there came from the cook's galley a fragrance of fried pork, and when it was closed a subtle flavour of bilge-water became perceptible. It is true that his present modest craft was only a makeshift recently acquired in the West Indies, and not the ship in which he had so long cruised unchallenged.

The moon peeped from under a cloud as they drifted past the Battery, but, as the bo'sen remarked under his breath, the sentries would not open their eyes unless Noah's Ark came by on fire. Presently they hoisted sail, and were soon gliding up the East River towards Hell Gate, short of which it was the Captain's intention to cast anchor.

A faint breeze filled the cutter's sails as, skirting Corlaer's Hook, she left the murky outline of New



York behind. Kidd threw a blanket upon the deck, wrapped himself in it, and bade Bendthebow draw near. The lieutenant, muffled in a stout overcoat, seated himself at his side ; the helmsman, a few yards behind them, laid their course, and half a dozen sailors stood by the ropes amidships. The stars brightened resplendently as the sky cleared, a mist wreath gathered under the shore, and from Long Island came the splash of a deer at the water's edge. The boding cry of a loon reached them, and busy night-hawks, attracted by the lantern which glimmered near their open hatch, swept round in wide circles.

The Captain suddenly raised himself, and addressing Bendthebow in a low voice, and with more kindly and familiar accent than was his wont, said :

‘The time draws near, my lad, when we must part. Our cruise is at an end, and while I regret nothing that has been done, I doubt not that the dark days of my life are before me. Codsounds!’ he ejaculated defiantly, ‘what is that man worth who cannot face a change of luck and dirty weather? We have achieved the success I promised. We set out veritable beggars of the sea, and during four years we have been the free masters of ourselves and of others, with no law to check and no force to prevent our course. I have tasted the sweets of life, and now I must drain the bitter. If any one of us has returned empty-handed, it is his own fault. For my part, when this storm has blown over I intend to leave the sea and end my days in peace at Greenock. You shall come to see me, and we will make merry at the shearing of land-sheep and the killing of pigs fatter than Dutch burghers, and watch the grain-laden carts lumbering like heavy Spanish galliots homeward

bound. But now, I have with me a small coffret filled with my trifling share of that which we have from time to time divided, which presently, at dawn, I intend to bury in a secret place I wot of yonder in the woods. I cannot sail into Boston with such a tell-tale chest aboard. Moreover, here is something else must presently go over the ship's side with a cannon-ball tied in its midst.'

And the pirate drew tenderly from beneath his coat a black flag, neatly folded, which he smoothed and patted daintily, like an old lady fondling and fingering and stroking rare and costly lace.

'What flag has power to stir men's thoughts like that!' he murmured admiringly,—'red gold the reward of victory, despair to strengthen the hand in defeat,—and for the rest of the world, fear that makes the heart weak as water. Let me think,' he added, gazing intently upon the sombre bunting: 'we have raised it three times—the first when the *Quedah Merchant*, alone upon the high seas, unsuspectingly showed her colours, and, by way of jest, we ran up this dusky scrap and sent a cannon-ball through her jib; and again, after we had stood out of Rio, under the very guns of the fort that fifteen minutes later received orders to sink us, and were just beyond range, we showed it out of sheer bravado; and the third time, you remember, was when off Hispaniola, two great galleons, each with its tier of cannon, came suddenly upon us at anchor, and we piped to quarters and ran up the black flag and stood ready to fight to the death, and at sight of our English teeth the Spaniards skulked away till we saw them hull down on the horizon. Well, well, all that seems long past; but now, for old times' sake, strike me dead if I don't

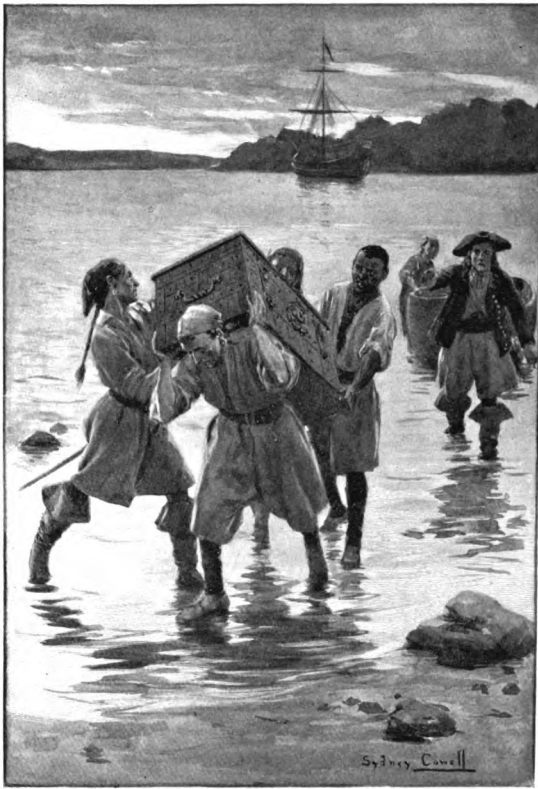
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hoist it again for an hour, and then to the bottom it shall go.'

He rose with the word, fastened it to the halliards and ran it to the peak, where it fluttered lazily—the emblem of rapine and booty and bloodshed in the midst of the pacific waters of New York.

Before their destination was reached the flag was sunk, and then Kidd called half a dozen men, and in the darkness raised to the deck from under his cabin an iron-bound chest, which, judging by the exertions required to move it, was filled with some unusual weight. The clouds which were drifting across the sky when they set sail floated away as they neared Horne's Hook, which commands the seething waters of Hell Gate and the Long Island woods opposite. Day broke as the precious chest was lowered into the yawl; and Bendthebow, casting a glance about him in the stillness of the early morning, beheld the rocks and trees of the silent shore, the sparkle of the river, the overhanging branches which almost touched their rigging. In that moment's pause his imagination leaped from the base and wicked life into which he had been led to the ideal that sometimes awakens within us when Nature unfolds the miracle of a new day. The flight of a young eagle, soaring majestically upward, seemed to him filled with direct meaning. At that moment he would not have raised a hand to save Kidd's treasure from the bottom of the river, and his thoughts reverted to Amanda with an intensity he had never before felt. Then, as the daylight broadened, Kidd and he and four rowers pulled away with the chest in their midst,—and the shadows of the night lifted, and with them vanished his dreams.

They rowed a short distance, and landed by the



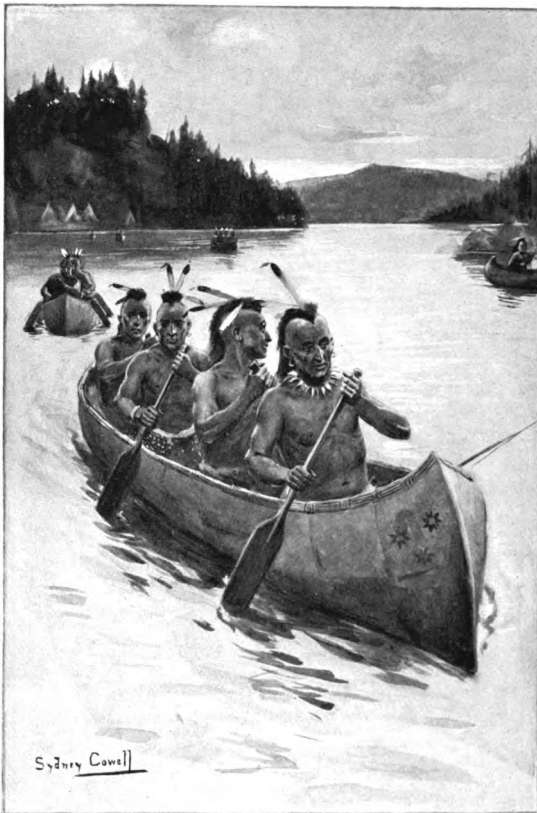
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side of a moss-tufted rock at a place where the knee-deep grass grew down to the water's edge. The Captain desired him to remain by the boat ; and the men, shouldering their burden, followed where Kidd led through the dense underwood. It seemed very still and lonesome when their footsteps died away, and Bendthebow was startled by the barking of a dog across the water. The sun appeared upon the horizon, and still he waited. Then from the distant fields came a fragrance that reminded him of boy-hood days, when he watched the cattle in the English meadows and plucked the first rose of summer and listened to the song-birds in the sky. Ah! those happy springtime days and the quiet home of youth! What heart is cold enough to recall them with indifference! He walked along the shore, and, wearied by the long night's waking, lay down to rest upon the grass in the slanting sunbeams, and looked up to the tree-tops, filled now with the glory of day. In the half-conscious, yet transcendent clearness of that moment's vision, he divined the inspiration of the forest, the grace of sun-touched flowers, the long vista of the greenwood, the whisper of sky-swung boughs. The shadows spread fantastic silhouettes upon the grass, and the musical voices of the forest—the rustling pines, the murmuring waters, the note of a solitary kingfisher, the hum of insect life—spoke to him from afar. Before him went the eddying river, seething furiously with myriad points of light about the rocks in mid stream. Through the haze of the Indian summer the purpling trees on the opposite shore lifted their russet branches, and the crisp autumnal air held the perfume of feathery pines and the aroma of fallen forest leaves,

finer than the flavour of wine. Life, illumined by the splendour of the sunrise, took on a new meaning, and the earth upon which he rested became in his imagination a sanctified substance, contaminated only by the touch of man. In that exquisite tranquillity he forgot the possible fate that awaited the Captain and himself and their hard-visaged crew. His musings took on a retrospective and sentimental colour, and reverted to the foam-crested billows of Southern seas, and the palms of many coral islands, and the Indian girls of the Spanish main, and the towering canvas of the *Quedah Merchant*, and the great blood-stain on her deck where the first man they killed lay dying. These memories might have strayed farther, had not his attention been suddenly riveted by a transformation that came over the scene before him. A woodpecker tapped solemnly in the distance; and, as if evoked by that weird signal, there appeared a party of Indians, the smoke of whose camp-fire curled amid the trees near by, while the squaws cooked and the old braves rested at their ease, and from a bend in the river came a birch canoe, with paddles flying in the hands of a party of young bucks, all of them gaudy with paint and feathers. He became conscious of a dim perception that it was no longer the actual present he gazed upon, but the remembered past of a century before, with the primeval forest, and the savages softened to an ethereal semblance of their former selves. And beside him stood one whose stealthy approach he had not at first detected—the type and spectre of a vanished tribe, seeming an animate link between past and present. He had once been a chief, a medicine man, with an eagle's plume through his scalp-knot;



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now he was a halting, misshapen creature, with a ragged blanket wrapped about his body and torn moccasins on his feet. Nothing of the original man survived but the thrilling intensity of his nature which looked from his beady black eyes. Yet, for all his squalor and deformity, Bendthebow was captivated by the dignity and reposeful self-command of this forlorn outcast, as he gazed with bitter melancholy upon the brilliant scene before them—the shining water, the tinted foliage, the hazy distances of forest and shore.

In that moment's pause there came from afar the noise of a woodman's axe, falling in measured beat, and at the sound the Indian's face became livid.

'Ay! cut them down,' he hissed under his breath, raising his quivering arm in malediction,—'cut down the trees, destroy the fish, kill all the game,—give the red man your diseases to corrupt his body, your fire-water to poison his heart, your deceits and follies to beguile and confuse his mind, your beads and trinkets in exchange for his land,—smoke the pipe or peace, and then cast him forth, a beggar and a vagabond, from among the hills where his fathers lie buried.'

'And who are you,' asked Bendthebow, roused by the frenzy with which the Indian poured out his words, and gradually bringing his cutlass within reach,—'who are you that stands upon the white man's land and raves about his doings?'

'Who I *am*?' echoed the Indian: 'you see well that I *was* a sagamore of the departed Manhattas. In an evil hour we yielded to the persuasion and pressure of the white men and sold them our home. Behold my share of the price!' he exclaimed passion-

ately, holding up a string of glass beads that hung about his neck, the value whereof might have been a penny. 'We were to live together as brothers, the pale-faces said; but how is an Indian to live without the fish and game of the wide forest? Shall the red sachems become tillers of the soil, like beasts! And see,' he added, plucking at his necklace: 'the bauble was doubly cursed—it proved a chain. From that day a spell was upon me, and I, Olathee, the Pride of the Rising Waters, became the white man's slave, and wear his fetter that nothing can break.'

'It was not a good bargain,' observed Bendthebow, with the calm of a man who has the best of the case, 'although at the time you were thoroughly content with it. But, to leave a useless discussion, tell me how you happen to be on this shore, where a moment ago I was alone.'

The old Indian drew his withered body to its fullest height as he slowly and painfully answered: 'I come hither because the white man, who seeks to possess himself of everything, has not yet effaced the traditions and memories that cling about our hunting grounds. We sometimes revisit them at daybreak, or in the quiet of starlight nights. Nevertheless, a time is coming when we shall shun this place. You have looked back a century: look forward with me now two centuries into the future.'

At the word the forest, with the Indians and their wigwams and canoes, vanished, and in their place Bendthebow beheld a city entirely covering Manhattan Island, with long straight streets bordered by thousands of plain little houses, each one the counterpart of all the others, from whose busy midst rose a humming sound, like the noise of a boiler factory.

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The vision, which seemed to fill many minutes, lasted but the infinitesimal fraction of a second—then he sprang to his feet and saw with relief that the November woods and the rippling Hell Gate current were unchanged. The distant woodman was still felling his tree, and at his feet drifted a twig which had moved but a few yards since he first noticed it. One change alone there was—a change that filled him with amazement and, shall it be said? with joy supreme. A mile distant, just rounding the point that closes Hell Gate, was the pirate cutter under full sail, gliding swiftly away, bearing with her, as he thought, his youth of wrong-doing, and leaving him free to choose a better life. Overcome by a sudden and profound emotion, he fell upon his knees, and, for the first time in many years, gave thanks to God.

A few weeks later, on the morning of Christmas Day, a marriage was celebrated at the Dutch Church in New York. The widow Mietjen was present, but as a witness, and, to her chagrin, not as one of the contracting parties. The Dominie read the service with more than usual earnestness, raising his voice, his eyebrows, and his scalp, till at each interrogatory a tuft of hair on the top of his head stood erect; then, when the solemn reply was uttered, brow and scalp resumed their normal position, and the scrap of hair dropped forward upon his bald pate. Before him stood Bendthebow and the blushing Amanda, and near them were the widow Mietjen, Rem Rapalye, and Rip Van Dam. Behind the Dominie was a large casement, through which those before him could look out upon the bright sunshine and the cloudless sky,

that seemed to bestow a benediction of peace and good-will.

Rem Rapalye looked through the window upon the leafless branches, and his thoughts went back to the preceding Christmas, when he and the Patroon, having left far behind the windmills of Albany, went to meet a band of trading Mohawks. And the sky before them grew black, and against it hovered great white birds, and the Indians stole their schnapps and, becoming furiously drunk, tomahawked two of their men and chased the rest of them for miles through a blinding snowstorm.

The bride's vision was of the future, where to the young and happy all things are for ever bright. Her thoughts took on no very precise form, but rambled away through a transfigured Bouwerie and Blooming dael where Dutch tulips are always in flower, and where the amethyst tresses of perennial lilacs scent the air, and where lovers walk in honeymoons that never end.

Bendthebow glanced out of the casement, unable longer to face the Dominie's thunder, which seemed like a salvo of artillery at the beginning of his new life. And he said to himself that, if he could not find Kidd's buried plunder, for which he had searched in vain, he had won the sweet heart of an honest maid ; and what better can be found in all the world ? Then, while the Dominie talked on, his thoughts reverted to the old English garden of his Berkshire home, and he recalled his last Christmas day by the Thames, when the hoar-frost had laid its fine and fairy tracery upon the branches, making the earth, far as the eye could reach, a land of Christmas trees. And he walked again along the familiar hedgerows and trod the fallen leaves of his remembered youth.

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Dame Mietjen gave the happy pair a wedding breakfast, to which half a dozen beside those at the church were bidden. They were attacking the first course, of pigs' trotters fringed with sausages and buried under a blanket of fried eggs, when the noise of a violent strife reached them from a neighbouring alley. The bride turned pale; and Rapalye, from the force of habit, cried, 'Indians!' and sprang to his feet. But it proved to be only Mistress Kidd being carried shrieking and swearing to the fresh-water pond, where she was ducked for a common scold, to the quieting of her tongue ever after.

The neighbours streamed in through the afternoon to drink caudle in honour of the newly married, wishing long life to the groom, and, in honest Dutch fashion, many children to the bride. Both these auguries were happily fulfilled. Bendthebow lived to see the shadows lengthen along the fading landscape of old age, and to tell Kidd's story to his grandchildren when he had become white-haired and when the grass had grown green through many summers upon Amanda's grave. The small people listened to the thrilling recital with such breathless awe as grand-sires' tales rarely command, and were never weary of hearing about the *Adventure* galley and the *Quedah Merchant* and the buried treasure chest. Nor did the narrative lose in spice or gilding as the years went by. But its supreme charm, and one that to the ears of childhood touched it with the flavour of a superlative fascination, was to think that in his young days the speaker, in flesh and blood before them, had actually sailed the seas under the gruesome spectre of the black flag!

## BRABANTIO'S LOVE

WHEN Desdemona and the Moor had taken their abrupt departure, the silence of Brabantio's stately palace smote him to the heart. A year passed, and then came news of the tragedy at Cyprus. Othello and Desdemona were in their graves, and vexed him no more. He was alone in the world now, with his life half played. The emptiness of politics and pageant and intrigue weighed on him as a yoke, and he marvelled how many masters were set over the Doge of Venice. Suddenly—at the age of fifty, a widower and childless—a subtle yet masterful flame kindled, and filled him with the witchery of its inspiration: he longed, with an infinite and passionate longing, for the pure and mystical love of a beautiful woman.

He was a fine-looking man, blest with the health that comes of an active life and abstemious habit; for the end of the fifteenth century was the prime of Venice, and there was neither sloth nor debauchery within her. His eyes were still as brilliant as in the days of his exuberant youth, when they first rested upon the fair face of Desdemona's mother; his voice was pleasantly modulated to the soft Venetian speech; and if the lines on his brow were deepening, they were but as the lengthening shadows

of a summer's day that has been soulful and sweet. It was in vain to brood upon the bygone and the lost, and he solaced himself with the reflection that the joy of life had not yet been wholly emptied.

In the course of his fifty years he had learned several useful things. He had come to understand that the opinion of the world is no better than a gossiping beldame ; that human knowledge is honey-combed with snares and pitfalls for the unwary ; that man is plagued with curious accidents and coincidences that cheat the rarest ingenuity and baffle the keenest calculation ; that the monotony of life is occasionally rent by dazzling events, often necessarily kept secret, of such extreme improbability that their occurrence astounds the mind. He cherished his religion as truth ; he valued gold as power ; it was because he believed in himself and knew his own purpose that he made his way. But, more than all these, he trusted in the fascinating and forbidden art of Almodoro the magician.

This Almodoro has left a strange fame in the annals of Venice. In the fifteenth century he was reported to be no other than Giacomo Contarini, who had been Doge of Venice half-a-dozen generations before, and to whose portrait he bore an astonishing resemblance. Men who had seen him went to look at the picture in the Doge's Palace, and found it Almodoro's face : the meeting eyebrows, the furtive look of the eyes, the sad, set expression of the lips, even the threads of grey hair above the left temple—all were there ; and it was remembered that no man could bear witness to the death of Contarini, who had resigned his office and left Venice, and whom rumour declared to have



been wandering ever since. Even the dullest could read the devil's blessing on that handsome face that never grew old; and the children, when they saw a withered leaf near him move and rustle, though not a breath stirred, knew that the feet of familiar spirits were not far. Many wondered that the Church laid not her heavy hand upon him; but he stood in such high favour that perhaps she durst not. Some said none could lay physical hold upon him, and that he could only be scourged with ghostly stripes. It was averred that once in Rome, some years before, he was commanded to be seized one night by a multitude of priests and friars and halberdiers. Arrived at his house, they ascended the stairs in a body, with swords and flambeaux and holy water and exorcisms and the clattering of many sandals, till they reached a great gallery, from whose dim distance came a shuffling of limping footsteps, and they caught sight of the semblance of a lame old man in clerical habit, looking back with frightened face. It was Monsignor Pasquale, who was lame all his life, who had been dead twenty years, and whose life-size portrait hung on the wall. The friars raised a hue-and-cry at the sight, and rushed after him like a rolling wave. But a captain of the guard who had known the Monsignor turned instinctively to scan his portrait, and a chill crept over him on discovering that a different personage filled the picture. The wrinkled visage was replaced by a beautiful and intellectual head—the head of Almodoro, and his body was robed in the magnificent garb of the Doge Giacomo Contarini. The wizard had thrust the aged and infirm prelate from his place, and had substituted himself upon the board—himself as he was a century

before. And when the monks and soldiers were weary with chasing shadows they went their ways ; and lo ! next morning Almodoro's image had vanished and the Monsignor's had slunk back to its place.

The magician had made a great name for himself in Venice, and in the popular diction it was said of him that he could 'rend the veil of the future in twain.' He had indeed grown adept in reading thoughts, and callous to the vices and crimes with which every land brought him in contact. Not desire for money alone determined his co-operation with the *clientèle* which sought him. More potent motives were love of that power which the astute hold over the credulous, and an enjoyment in the skilful application of his circuitous methods—similar somewhat to the zest of a mathematician in the solution of a problem, or the satisfaction of an inventor in the exercise of his gifts. Occasionally some critical issue, some complicated situation was confided to his judgment, with rich results in prospect and knotty entanglements about the execution ; and then it was that he laboured patiently and with refinement of elaboration to group circumstances and determine time and fix the opportunity and secure concealment, till in his eyes his perfected scheme seemed an artistic masterpiece.

It was to this worthy that Brabantio had betaken himself for guidance after Desdemona's flight ; and who shall say how far the wizard's charms and spells may have operated to bring about the sanguinary ruin which presently involved both the Moor and his ill-fated bride ? It was again to Almodoro that he had recourse now, with a stranger proposal on his lips than the conjurer was often wont to hear.

'Every summer,' he began, 'Venice, passing down the steps of Time, bathes her feet in the Adriatic, and her Doge, in all the pomp and splendour of his office, is wedded to the glistening sea. Nevertheless it is, at the best, a halting espousal, and it rings in my thoughts to perfect this ephemeral marriage and to make it a reality.'

The alchemist, who in his day had encountered many forms of madness, listened with unruffled calm. 'Nothing will be easier,' he answered, 'if you, master, will but indicate the way.'

'There are some rocks in the sea near Amalfi,' said Brabantio, speaking with intense emotion, 'called the Siren Islands, and famous since the days of Ulysses. If you sail about them, as I have done, you can see the bold face of the cliffs catching the flushes of dawn, and the waves dashing in and tossing the spray aloft like a banner. 'Tis there the Sirens lurk far down in the deep-sea caves, or bask in the sunshine on the water. Few men have ever obtained more than a distant peep at them; and your task, Almodoro, will be to catch one and bring her alive to Venice. Shall I not then in very sooth be wedded to the sea, and will you not be well rewarded if I pay you her weight in ducats!'

A month later the Doge was summoned to Almodoro's house, and hastened thither in breathless impatience. He went at night in strict incognito, in a plain gondola with only two rowers. The conjurer received him in a small room which ordinarily served as a retired nook for meditation.

'Is she here?' asked Brabantio softly, casting his eyes eagerly about, as soon as they were alone.

‘No, she is upstairs awaiting you in the arbour.’

‘Diavolo! how did you snare her, O marvellous man?’

‘The difficulty was to get within speaking distance. That gained, and one of them listening, I offered her the only faculty she had not. These Sirens already possess most of the things my art can bestow—perpetual youth, changeless beauty, fascination upon whoever sees them. And so I tempted her with an extraordinary lure—the gift to renew and rekindle the pleasures and memories and loves of the past.’

‘And her name . . . if she has one?’

‘Her name is Marigiana: “sea-duck,” it means.’

‘And is she beautiful?’

‘It is not for me, who am dead to woman’s beauty and to love, to say. But follow me and you shall see.’

In the corner of a tiny garden, built upon a colonnade, and overlooking the Grand Canal, reclined the Siren. She was attired in a flowing gown, and her hair was carelessly bound in a coil, through which, in Venetian fashion, she had thrust a slender stiletto. Above her were trellised lilac bushes that touched the Maytime with fragrance; and at her feet, in a metal vase, burned a spiced concoction whose flame brightened with prismatic tints. The Doge started, and crossed himself and clasped his hands at sight of her rare and subtly smiling countenance. Even the imperturbable Almodoro turned to look back upon him with triumph. There before them was the matchless colour the fair weather of ages had laid on her cheeks, and the violet green her eyes had caught from the sparkling brine. There was the shapely neck and the statuesquely graceful

figure, and the lithe symmetry that ended her strange body in the contour of a dolphin. To Brabantio it seemed that he looked less upon a material figure than upon some day-dream of his youth revived and restored to him, after all these years, from the dazzling sea of all his life's desire.

He advanced, and, taking her hand, would have raised it to his lips in amorous salutation. But the strange being snatched it away with a malicious laugh, and spoke in a soft low voice that differed from any human accents.

'Beware!' she cried: 'know you not the fate that awaits the mortal whose spirit is touched with the love of a Siren?'

'Yes,' answered the Doge, seating himself; 'these loves that God and man forbid cast a shadow over the soul. They are a blemish upon the mortal spirit, obscuring even its perception of right and wrong. The conscience becomes like a mirror that has been breathed upon and that reflects no more. And yet—though I behold you now for the first time—yet have I loved you so long that nothing can change my purpose to make you my wife. And though it should be at the risk of my immortal being, yet shall our lives and fates be joined.'

'I shall make you an ill-chosen mate—and an unwilling one at that. Do you suppose I can forgive the lure with which this strange man snared me, or that I who was born and have lived in the slumberous majesty of the deep sea can endure the empty foolishness you mortals call life, or that there is a single pulse in the feeble fibre of your love that could beat in unison with a tremendous passion?'

'Yes,' interposed Almodoro, who had listened to

the words they exchanged, 'it is not beyond the power of my art to strike where the heart-strings beat. You shall bathe in the foam of the sea ; you shall have perfumes distilled from flowers that bloomed in Elysium ; you shall be thrilled with music as sweet as any you remember ; and in this man's great love you shall find a passion equal to any you have ever known.'

'And your love, Almodoro,' asked the strange creature, with the untutored frankness of a savage, 'shall I have your love too ?'

'That were my death,' gravely replied the alchemist. 'I have already told you that love is the infirmity which in its essence holds the poison of decay. Only through complete self-conquest, which is the extinguishment of every earthly affection, can the forces of Nature be arrested.'

'And shall you, then, never die ?'

'Who knows,' answered Almodoro pensively, 'or who shall say that some dross of humanity, some particle of human love might not one day contaminate me and draw me from things spiritual and immortal to things earthly, all of which are touched by death ?'

'But,' interrupted Brabantio, taking Marigiana's hand, 'I shall permit you only one love, and that mine own. Moreover, you shall be the bride of Venice, and all will do homage to you, for will not each see in you the incarnation of the Adriatic at last and in very truth espoused ?'

Their talk turned presently upon lighter themes ; and ere long Brabantio bade his affianced as tender a good-night as her obdurate reserve permitted. When they were alone Almodoro raised her in his arms, and carried her lightly across the garden to the

place where the bed she desired—a great bundle of fresh-cut grass—had been laid beneath the stars. Her face was near his, her arms were about his shoulders, a subtle fragrance of sea-anemones lingered in her hair,—suddenly she bent nearer as though to press his lips with hers. But the magician forced her brusquely from him upon her couch, and left her without a word. He knew, and laughed softly at the thought, that womanlike she craved the one thing impossible for her to possess—the love of a man who had put all love away for ever. Oddly enough, she laughed too when she was alone, a rippling, mocking laughter, and murmured, as she composed herself to sleep: ‘Could there be a sweeter death than to breathe one’s last in a kiss!’

The next morning Brabantio was seated in his study with a handful of unopened despatches and reports before him. Senators and admirals waited in his ante-chamber, or went away; but presently Almodoro came, and was instantly admitted.

‘She is well—quite well,’ he replied in answer to a dozen eager questions, ‘and you shall wed her as soon as you please.’ Then, seating himself in a great carved chair near the Doge’s table, he said, with a clear, logical perception that was no small part of his magic: ‘We have to appeal to this queer being through the same emotional forces by which the feminine mind is usually influenced. I move her vanity by holding before her gaze the lofty station of *Dogaressa*. I touch a string that vibrates through her entire Past when I speak of a phantom love I have discovered crossing her line of the heart at a bygone—possibly a remote period. I intend to

evoke that phantom, believing that through it I shall control her, as a woman is often governed by the memory of a passion which, though dead, is still cherished.'

'But to awaken this ancient flame may be infinitely to my disadvantage,' musingly objected Brabantio.

'Not if it be presented in such guise as to give a startling shock to the treasured memory. Suppose, for example, a woman who broods upon her absent lover could by some spell be shown a presentment of him in the embrace of another.'

'And your spells can do all that and more, none knows better than I. You will present to her the scenes with which she was familiar years, years ago, on many a well-remembered day, and lead her through an hour of soft and infinitely sweet emotion to a new awakening—a torch kindled in the twilight.'

'All this you shall see to-night,' assented the alchemist; 'and you shall be married to-morrow, and take her, if you will,' he added, with a slightly sarcastic inflection, 'to the groves where the wild doves are cooing.'

That evening, through the languorous dusk, Brabantio's gondola bore him secretly as before to the house of Almodoro. The Grand Canal was brilliant with coloured lights, and from a gondola that rested with idle oars before a palace came the sound of exquisite music, the tinkling cadences of mandolins, the thrumming of the guitar of Castile and the vibrant voice of a lover.

'How divinely will she sing to me, on many a summer's morning!' thought the Doge—'she who has listened to the harmonies of the waves and caught the whispered meaning of the breeze.' And when,



a moment later, he stood by her side, he addressed her with the impassioned fervour of a young lover, and of one emboldened by the consciousness that superhuman agencies are enlisted in his aid. And now, to his delight, the Siren lifted her bright eyes to his and did not withdraw her hand.

‘Let us forget the past,’ he murmured, ‘with its remote and short-lived days. Cannot you see with me in the future the radiant embodiment of our transfigured lives?’

‘Alas!’ exclaimed the nymph, ‘you will not understand that I love not you, but Almodoro. I am no woman to be a housewife and wear fine gowns and heed your gala days and pageants. For me the infinite repose of silence, and the sun springing up from the solitude of the sea, and my white body fairer than silks or satins, and the secrets of all Time whereof I sing, and such strange passionate ardours as the sun-god teaches. I do not more than half love Almodoro either; but he has a sort of fascination for me—because I cannot understand him or his ways.’

Their colloquy was interrupted by the approach of Almodoro. He had received the Doge in a large room that occupied half the lower floor of his house, and having seen to the closing of the shutters, now directed their attention to a gauze curtain which hung at the extremity of the room farthest from where they were seated. He placed himself by the side of Marigiana, who reclined on an Oriental divan, and addressing himself equally to her and to Brabantio, spoke to them in brief, straightforward words.

‘We all know,’ he began, ‘that sometimes a

friendship or companionship, such as we frequently see about us, is continued on earth for years after one of those who shared it is physically no more. Such a survival, when complete and perfect, is rare. It depends for its existence upon the ethereal or refined quality of our nature—for the flesh contaminates the spiritual being in life, and may wholly extinguish it. It survived so strongly in Lazarus as to triumph even over the grave. Without stopping to enumerate other such instances, I will tell you that I am about to revive behind that gauze the semblance of one who loved Marigiana many centuries ago, and who seems to have exercised a preponderating influence upon her nature and her destiny ever since.

The magician had kindled in a basin behind the screen some substance which now emitted a light film of pungent smoke, obscuring the other end of the room. The gauze, however, about which it wreathed itself, assumed a brighter appearance, seemingly catching from some unseen flame a sparkling and iridescent and crystalline light and colour.

‘That,’ murmured the seer, regarding it with fixed attention, ‘is the veil of the Past; when we have seen what it discloses, I will part for you the curtain of the Future.’

They had not long to wait ere the prismatic tints assumed the semblance of a marine view of transcendent beauty. There were the dazzling splendour of the amaranth-tinted Adriatic and the liquid yellow of the familiar horizon. The eye looked across orange groves and trellised honeysuckle, and out upon the rippling sparkle of the sunshine and the sea.

Suddenly against the vapoury film uprose the

figure of a large and powerful man. There was nothing peculiar in his Venetian costume, and from the hesitation of his mien he seemed perplexed and undecided. He peered anxiously towards where they sat at the dim unlighted extremity of the room, and stood waiting in motionless expectancy, while they regarded him with breathless interest. Here, at last, thought Brabantio, is the mortal enemy—that ancient lover who ages ago taught Marigiana the caresses of first love, and tasted her lips and held her in his embrace. This was the spectre that baffled all her new desires at their inception, who would dispute her possession now—even with the Doge of Venice and Almodoro. And, gazing from this figure, which was said to feel neither change nor decay, to Marigiana, whom Nature had willed to be ever beautiful and young, it seemed to him that, by some strange mirage of imagination, the brief span of his own life—with its vicissitudes and griefs, its remote infancy, and its fading vista of friendships and ambitions—had been as lengthy as the fabled existences before him.

His thoughts were recalled from these musings by the singular agitation which the apparition produced upon Almodoro, by whom it was evidently unexpected. But upon the Siren the effect was still more decisive. The subtle perception of her senses—finer than that of an ordinary woman, finer than that of any man, even though he were a wizard of the purest fibre—instantly detected that the presence before them was that, not of a spectre, but of a living man and an enemy.

‘Look to yourself, magician!’ she exclaimed; then, swiftly checking herself, ‘No,’ she whispered

—‘it is the Doge he threatens: it is an assassin, a *spadassino*, you have evoked!’

At these significant words the apparition brusquely dashed aside the curtain, having evidently derived his resolve from Marigiana's utterance. A hasty stride—a bound—and he was upon them, stiletto in hand.

But Brabantio could be upon occasion a cool and self-reliant soldier, accustomed to the tragic surprises and contingencies of Italian life in the Quattro Cento. The personal identity of the spectre was no longer a mystery to him, for he drew his poniard, and, with a cry of rage, sprang forward. They were no ill-matched pair of gladiators, these two, thought Marigiana, who had witnessed sea-fights and knew how brave men die. Only a breathless instant's pause, then each spasmodically clutched the other's left hand, and the stilettos flashed free; only a breathless instant's pause, and then but one blow descended, for Almodoro, springing forward, caught the stranger's blade and wrenched it from his grasp.

‘It is Tryphonius, the Cypriote,’ said Brabantio, wiping his dripping stiletto, and gazing at his prostrate assailant as though he would fain have despatched him.

And as he spoke, Marigiana, without the restraint of a maiden coyness, which perhaps was not in her nature, threw her arms about the magician's neck and kissed him. She knew only how to act as instinct prompted, upon the impulse of the moment, and in alarm and danger turned as naturally to him and to the curious fascination he exercised over her as in the open sea, in a moment of fright or peril, she might instinctively have sought one of her half-human mates.

Taken thus suddenly at unawares, the magician yielded himself for a single delirious instant to the thrilling sweetness of the beautiful mermaid's embrace. Her lips were upon his but for a second, then in a frenzy he cast her off.

But the effect upon Almodoro of that tremulous lapse from ascetic virtue, that first insidious and half-involuntary deviation from the severe self-denial of a lifetime, was appalling. He aged thirty years in as many seconds. In a single instant all the conquered forces and passions of his nature, all the sympathies and emotions he had denied, all the enslaved cravings and imaginings of his mind, rose in tumultuous revolt and overwhelmed the principle of supreme self-mastery to which he owed his intellectual dominion. The youthful appearance, whereof he boasted that it was changeless, vanished, and his face seemed to shrivel as though Nature were exacting the instantaneous payment of the accumulated debt of centuries. With inflexible patience he had subjugated the earthly elements of his being to the spiritual and immortal principle of his divine soul. He had succeeded, for had he not held death and infirmity at bay? He had failed, because a breath of morbid passion in the form of an unsuspected and involuntary sympathy with this strange being, and a spasmodic response to the love she offered, had stolen unawares within his citadel. In this, it may be, lay the secret of his precipitate fall,—that it was not the love of woman that had tempted him, but the allurements of an idea at first bewildering and incomprehensible. He knew that the elaborate tyranny of an absolute will was wrecked, and realised that life—the life so long held in complete suspense and lifted

above the mutability of time—was ebbing from him as from an open wound. Marigiana, aghast at what she had done, and not comprehending the cause of the alchemist's distress, sought to enfold him again ; but, raising himself from the divan upon which he had sunk, he motioned her away with abhorrence.

'I am dying,' he whispered to the Doge, with white and quivering lips. 'I shall be dead in a few moments unless the perfect and absolute life-essence be given me.'

'And what is that? and where am I to find it?' exclaimed Brabantio, who had caught Almodoro's cold hands in his, and stood looking in his face with the wildest terror.

'About my neck—a crystal. Crush it, and give me its essence upon my lips.'

The Doge was not wholly unversed in alchemy, and knew the effect that could be produced by this strange prescription. He hastily took from the wizard's neck an amulet, in which was a crystal wherein could be discerned a tiny drop of water. The thought possessed him that here was the primeval element of life, of the mist that ascended beneath the warmth of the sunshine of the day of creation, or of the dew that fell on the night that followed. The black art taught that it was free from the contamination of man, that death was unknown when it became enclosed in its little recess, and that even after the lapse of ages it might still retain something of the essence of life. He crushed it beneath the hilt of his stiletto, and held the fragments to Almodoro's lips, where a particle of their moisture rested. The effect was electrical : the alchemist's breath returned ; his pallor lessened ; his

eyes recovered their usual expression, and rested upon Marigiana, standing beside the great doorway she had thrown open at the edge of the Grand Canal.

She had cast off the gown with which civilisation had robed her, and stood looking back upon him tenderly and longingly, as perhaps she may have gazed upon Andromeda, in the superb nudity of uncovered shoulders and bosom, and of lithe, strong arms clinging to the sculptured door, with the lower part of her body tapering away to the green and scaly and dolphin-shaped fins that supported her. It was his last look at his first and only love; and as she plunged head foremost into the black water of the Canal and disappeared, it seemed to him that so extraordinary a semblance could not actually have existed, and that it must have been only a vagary of the intellect, an accidental discord of an overwrought mind. But possibly the reverse was nearer truth, and it may be that in the web of sophistry and the perversion of nature in which the alchemist had spent so long a lifetime his encounter with the sea-nymph was one of the few realities. So nearly does the channel of curious arts resemble the course of everyday knowledge, that the mind, like the senses, cannot invariably determine between the actual and the visionary.

Unfortunately there was not a second crystal available for Brabantio, to whom the shock and chagrin of the Siren's escape proved fatal. He sought her eagerly for days in the *Bucentoro*, out upon the Adriatic, saying ever and again, 'When she sees me with the nuptial ring and having on a wedding garment, she will come,' and crying, 'She is there!' where a shining ripple touched the lagoon



*"Brabantio's Love."*





a mile away. But these declarations presently gave place to delirium, and he pined for the sake of the mermaid's face that had entranced him for an hour, and of the extraordinary and phenomenal passion that had illumined his life for a day.

## CLIEFDEN LIGHTS AND SHADES

FROM A MANUSCRIPT OF ANDREW DEEPEGROVE

CLIEFDEN, *Royal Oak Day*, 1690.

LOOKING lately through the Tudor Presse, I came upon the Duke of Buckingham's Alchemical Bottles and conjuring books, in the same confusion wherein they were so oft spread out before him. And I remember the perception I once overheard him expound from them, that when the interest in life abates, its duration, curiously enough, is drawing to an end. Which may be true, albeit as unavailing as the portrait of my Lord Duke himself, when he was an innocent fayre visaged chylde, which by a sarcasticall fate hung at his bed's head when he lay dead—a wrecked and shattered man. Likewise came it back to me, traversing the hall, how one evening shortly before my Lady of Shrewsbury's cheerless going hence, her love having become as a stone, she idled in the chimney corner, drawing from her Lute its subtle Chords, when behold, the clock chime struck athwart her musique with a curious tinklinge ecstasie, as of Memories wild and sweete. Could any Memories have been more tragical, however romantique, than hers? And her song was that the Chesseplayers sang so beautifully :

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Or ever the silver cord be loosed,  
Or the golden Bowl be broken ;

Wherefore since those dayes, when some rapt singer fills the ayre, I sometimes muse what secret and maybe anguished Pulse inspires (for aught we know) that fine Refrain ; and how the World, listening to such a Song-bird's gladnesse, would marvel, could it discern through the thrilling cadence, that the minstrel's Harte is breaking.

It was on a May morning in the yeere 1668, fowre months after the duell at Barne Elmes where the Duke of Buckingham ranne that fine Rapier he called his Valenciennes needle through Lord Shrewsbury's Bodye, that Pansie Brighteyes, which was one of her Ladyship's tyring mayds, and as choyce a Baggage as man might wish to meet, came a bustling into my Buttery, with her kissing strings streaming in the wind. On the greensward, in the Duke's garden, my lord and Sir Robert Holmes, which was commonly called the Queen's pawn among the Chesseplayers' fraternitie and which was one of the seconds on our side at Barne Elmes, were recreating themselves with buttoned foyles and masques repeating for an howre together,

Froissez—pointez—dégagez,  
Demicercle—battez—à fond.

Now Pansie looked so pretty, with her cheeks afire from running, that as she came in I could not refrain thinking to myself, if thou wert pye, I'd eat thee ! I'd have kiss't her too, had not my She-Cozen been lurking betwixt the Storeroom and the Buttery. For, knowing it to be my daughter Maudlyn's birthday, she had sett forth towards pudding time from Maydenhead, like the Smell feast she is. So although I can

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neither forget nor forgive how once she gave me a draught against ague which I afterwards learned was compounded of Beetles and fatt Batts, I ordered Harkaway, the page, to sett her forth in the kitchen a slice of roly-poly with a dishe of hartichokes.

At that moment came Pansie from the Wanton's Bowre, as people afterwards called it, where Lady Shrewsbury was mighty busy listening to Master Beddingfield, telling me I was to bring him refreshments thither—any cag-nag she sayd would do—he being loath to show himself at the house. It did not marvel me that my lady should be gossiping with one whom all the world knows was a Jesuit Go-between of the French King, for in those guerdonlesse times we were used to new-found friends. But as I spread a cold Fricassey with lady-longings and a flask of clarett on a tray, I felt right glad this call upon my Larder came not one day sooner, when for a few howres—our provender wagon having chancewise broken a wheel in some ditch—I had nothing better in the house, God forgive me! than a hash of Rabbits.

I found my lady sitting in a cane chair with her Manto thrown back, her pomander ball hung as usual at her waist, her feathered hatt fallen on the ground, and Master Beddingfield talking mighty earnest with quick soft words. But, setting the tray before him, what I chiefly marked, was a great diamond my lady held a glimmering in her hands, as bigg as a Walnutte and sparcling in the sunshine like a little star. Unheeding me he pursued his discourse, whereof I caught the words . . . . 'his Majestie's custom is to wear it in his hatt.' To which quoth my lady ' . . . Sancy! what a commonplace name for the trinket that kings have cherished.'



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Then turning away, my duty being done, I almost stumbled over Sir Robert Holmes, who, doubtless drawn to the spot by the sound of an unfamiliar voice, came striding upon us in a jiffy, looking as bigg as if he had eaten a Bull. At sight of whom my lady picked up her hatt and gathering her Manto about her ruff marched gravely off without a word. But the men spoke up most uncivil berating one another, and both talking together enough to make one suppose they had met and quarrelled afore.

So when Master Beddingfield turned to go back towards the River, whence doubtless he had come, Sir Robert was also going his ways ; but suddenly spying the great diamond lying in the grasse, where amongst them it had fallen, he clapt me on the shoulder and bade me run after ' that cockapert animallio ' and give him his Toy. And when I took that shining stone into my hand, it made me think of those fantastical gems as bigg as eggs and bright as fyre which the Italian Astrologer was for ever prating about and the like whereof he sayd the Caliphs bestowed upon their Wenches. But suddenly Sir Robert stopped me and musing with himself murmured, ' Give it me, Deepe-grove, that I may deliver it to thy Master ' ; so having been brought by Beddingfield and bestowed upon my lady, the King of France's great diamond came into my hands, to travel thence by Sir Robert Holmes to the Duke of Buckingham, and all within the Compasse of an howre.

Whom should I presently find in the dining-room but my lady still in her hatt and Manto, a speaking to Harkaway so gentlewise and giving him a florin (he having had ill news from home) as made me ghesse some mischief must be brewing. For when



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my lady was vext, she gave those about her pepper to snuff, and that in a rouncifull voice ; in which she nowise differed from her fellowes, one of whom at Yule-tide, being somewhat whittled with Nectar, stampt her little foot when I lett fall her pounce box and vowed with a Dammy I was fitt for nothing but to lead Apes in Hell. But when Lady Shrewsbury, being stung to the Quicke, forebore to cavill, but smiled as fine ladies may, a trifle askew, you might know she bottled up her Wroth. Wherefore as she must needs take umbrage at Sir Robert Holmes intermeddling, I thought to put a patch upon their feud by doubling their Commones, but all the while they satt at meat, from the olives to the green cheese, I could perceive my lady lett fall to Sir Robert several bantering Taunts and unpleasing Jestes, turning his wine to water as the saying is, yett that so deftly that he could find nothing to pick a bone upon, albeit his red face betrayed he waxed testy.

Before dinner was served Pansie whispered me on the stayres what she had overheard Master Beddingfield talking of—a pretty kettle of fish pore Pansie made of it—that the French King would give his little all if our alliance with the Dutch were undone, and how, at the price of the Sancy diamond, my lady was to poison the Duke of Buckingham's mind against it, so that the Dutch, whilst fishing fayre, might catch but a frogge.

Sir Robert Holmes ordered his men and his horse to be ready at two of the clock to speede him to London where he would supp. And gainsay it who will, I verily believe he took the diamond with him to cast it back in Master Beddingfield's teeth. For an howre later when I went to the withdrawing-

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room, which was Lady Shrewsbury's Boudoir, to lay out cards, thinking they might divert themselves with *primavista*, I came upon my lord and my lady standing together by the fireplace. And by this token you may know people of breeding, that they do not heed to interrupt their kissing in presence of inferiors. My lady had laid her hands upon my lord's shoulders, her Venetian sleeves fallen back, baring her beautiful whyte armes, and with an arch smile and a roguish sweetness that would have melted the crustiest churl, she sayd, 'Dear harte, dost think I would receive any man's gift but thine?' And he, unheeding my presence, kist her tenderly upon the lips and sett a spray of amber lilies in her bodice. But I cherish that instant's memorie because a very few dayes thereafter, their discourse seemed to be at cross purposes, untill one morning we missed my lady and behold in the night, at the waning of the moon, she had sped away. Why did they quarrel? Perhaps 'twere a shrewd answer that folk who agree when brought secretly together for a brief span, under the impulse of an amorous passion, if lodged cheek by jowl with the petty griefs of every day and with the sting of conscious wrong, may presently find their good cheere grown cold. So perhaps that was the last kiss of those twain which for love's sake had cast many of life's Benisons to the Breeze. And standing in that same room to-day wiping the mirror before which my lady oft frized her haire about her eares, and wherein my daughter Maudlyn says she hath caught a glimpse of something behind her own reflected features—a semblance of phantom smiling faces, intent and wistful, that vanish ere fully seen—I chuckle to myself and

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wonder, being free as any man to wink and chuse, what would her ladyship have done with the diamond had not Sir Robert Holmes stumbled upon the scene?

I was nowise sorry, dinner over and all this foolishnesse at an end, to withdraw to the Buttery, where my forethought had put aside by way of crust for me and Pansie, the remains of a Frincando suttly dressed, together with potched eggs, a box of French plums and a flask of Canarie. So when Miss Light-skirts came spick and span we fared together as gladly as did the Israelites when quails strewed their camp. Whereat she cast gybes at me for my hunger, likening me to the proverbial miller's Dogge, which begins to lick his chops ere the poke is open. Moreover, she told me that for all the love that had been betwixt them, my lord was growing impatient of having, as the proverb runs, to stay abed every time her ladyship was ill. Whereat I thought to improve the occasion by expounding how the Good Booke declares that Love is the resting of the affections, adding that a woman's harte wilts where no love blossoms.

'Go kiss the Parson's Wife!' cried Pansie Bright-eyes, slapping her knee, which is something she learned from my lady. But when I made as though to take her at her word as she satt over against me, looking in her little russet steeple crown as pert as any game bird, she made up her sawsy lips as though to whistle me down the wind, for the slipper-tongued jade could whistle trilling shrill as any blackbird. So I edged her into a corner and came close, as the saying is, to look babies in her eyes.

Gramercie, I was thirty in those dayes and Pansie twenty, and we thought it natural as helping a lame

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Dogge over the Stile to take hands and kisse and vow we'd never part. I wonder is she alive or dead to-day? I never since that Maytime have seen her face, and our Troth, which we meant so honestlie, was but a chylde's broken toy. Yet will even the wisest and most philosophical Solomon of all deny that, in after age and after love, our fondest solace shall be in the putting together again of some such broken playthings of our youth!

Through the hurly-burly of those Riotous yeeres, the Duke of Buckingham played his game with Fate. A splendid game if you will, yet after touching many things he must have found that some, at least, of his eagle-herns were but ducks and drakes. He enriched the measure of his life with hues of exceptional brilliance—statecraft as particoloured as a tortoise-shell Catt and ruddy flashes of adventure and the mellow shadings of romantique dalliance, and withal such opalescent commingling of merth, musique, bookish lore, Witchcraft, happy fellowship and good cheere as must have given food for many an howre's profitable meditation. No man delighted more than he in the glamour of the impossible. Few pay more dear to learn how painfully must we climb, and through what rugged spurs, to reach our goal. He was a man that could sail on any wind, though never of those of whom during the Warre we saw too many, which went to bed Cavalier and got up Roundhead. The most interesting page in the life of such a man (one who for Love's sake has schemed, fought and suffered) is that never written—the tablet of his solitary musings. And while 'twas not difficult to ghesse what my lord's communings ranne

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upon in the mornings when he was shut up in his Closett with his Divining rods and Divvel's Hornbookes, or when after my lady had gonne her wayes we saw a light shining nightly in his Casement, I remember how on Summer afternoons he satt alone and thoughtful in what from this association we came to call the Duke's garden, smiling now and again to himself in deepe content. Whereof, I wonder, was he so merthfully pondering? Was it of spicy ups and downs at Court, or of the humours of remembered gallantries, or merely of the grotesque freaks and foibles of that Collossal Humbug, the world's opinion? To this day are sett in that narrow close significant plants, such as Forgett-mennott in memory of the Whyte King; and sprigs of heartsease of the Duke's own chusing, for a remembrance of three or fowre fayre Moppets; and a blood-red rose by way of reminder of the Duell at Barne Elmes, which is amiss, for Lord Shrewsbury's hurt, like all deepe wounds, bled little; and Love-in-idlenesse for a Satyr upon the Chessplayers' froliques, and Marigold, which was the cream of the jest, for the Italian Astrologer; and Columbine, which Master Curley Queue, the court jester, planted; and Rue for the great Dogge Cerberus, which twenty yeeres syne dyed of the Surfeit occasioned by eating a whole Hogge-pot which stood an unguarded moment in the kitchen; and Greenever to think upon Master Fludd the Rosicrucian, who was never to dye—and in the Boscage against the house, where Lady Shrewsbury often satt, a trayling sweetebriare she planted, and which has crept to her casement, wreathing the stones each yeere with bloom.

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It was on the morning following Master Beddingfield's froward incursion that I was summoned to the Duke's great Closett. This room was the only place in the house continually in a litter, one side being filled with books crammed and packed higgledy-piggledy upon shelves and musty by reason we were forbidden to touch them; opposite were glazed cabinets containing alchemical Vials of curious shape, a philosopher's egg, whatsoever that may be, and other like Divvel's tools; above the mantel were rapiers, one being the Valenciennes needle, and beneath a silver-mounted musquatoon of rare workmanship. The fourth hath a broad window, looking eastward, which on a fine morning doth through its little painted panes flash extraordinary luminous tints and spread the floor as with a patchwork of crimson and birds-egg blue. Here at a writing-table, cunningly devised with drawers and secret niches, oft satt my lord weaving fine threads through spheres of love or lore or businesse, and here I found him sitting on this morning, his haire freshly combed, and opposite him Messer Damiano, a swarthy Italian speaking our English tongue with a foreign twang, who, as all the world knows, was an Astrologer of no mean parts, and who bears a birth mark like two crossed finger-tips on his cheek.

This same Scholar came twice to Cliefden, and though I offered him every service, bringing his morning draught each day he never greased my palm with so much as a Maravedi. Whereof as to this gentry, give me leave to say that for all their store of Doubloons they be uncommon sparing of their Stivers. Furthermore, weighing the issues of

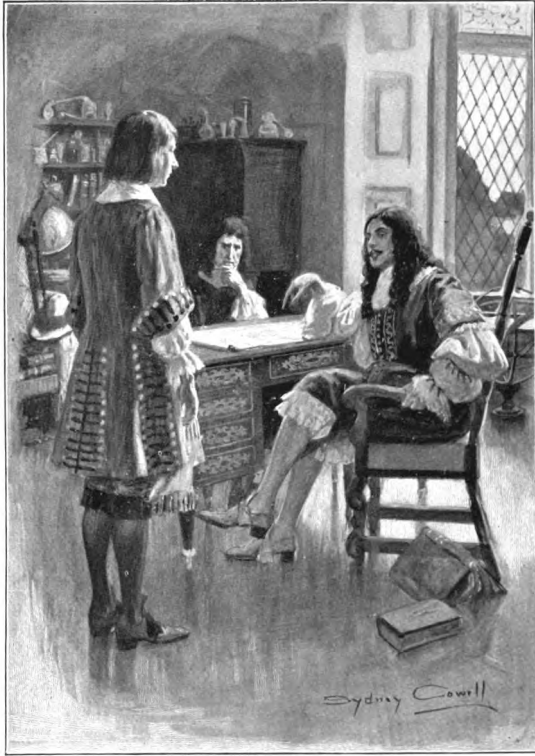
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Alchemy in general, I make bold to whisper, 'Cutt off its Head and Tayle and cast the rest away.' The sublimest and the most pathetic spectacle is to see pore Humanity lifting itself from its gropings and setting its face towards the hope of better things. But 'tis hard to believe our guides should be those whom Paul delivered unto Satan. A yeere after, in London, having a mind to taste the curious wisdom for which Damiano is famed, I took occasion one day, being charged to deliver to him a fatt purse of angelots from the Duke, to crave some word that in the extremity of fear or peril, when all standbys fail, might light the way. Then, after smiling and mumbling to himself, he wrote these words,—

*Si farà quello che si può,*

giving me them upon a paper folded small, saying it must be opened only at a pinch. And having by virtue of an inquiring mind unfolded it that same day and shown it to my Master, he straitway laughed till I felt like a Crasse-foole, and gave the paper back. So with one thing and another, and remembering he never repaid me two ginneys laid out for the washing of his ruff-bands, and bearing in mind the scar on his face, I resolve, though all too late, never to trust one whom God hath marked.

My Master addressed me to the poynt as ever, but without his accustomed brevity. His leisurely choyce of words showed this to be no ordinary jobb. 'Harkye, Deepegrove,' quoth he, lifting his eyes from a map of Burnham Beeches, 'I have for weeks been upon the trace of a secret that should be no Jack o' lantern. There is hidden somewhere here' (tapping the map) 'an incomparable treasure, which with



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Messer Damiano's help it is my purpose to recover. We know that it is buried within the compass of a Moat and lies under the shadow of two old trees. But there are several ditches and any number of pairs of stately trees. From this room I have obtained a glimpse of the cell wherein it rests, and as showing how the spiritual eye may be trayned to perceive things which defy an ordinary sense, I have distinguished upon the sand which strews its floor, the footprints of those who, ages gone, raised its sunken arch above the gems of Roman fugitives, the treasure chest of a Legion, the silver table service of a Cesar. To bring this within a hand's clutch we need a fresh and fearlesse mind, familiar with such landmarks as are scattered through the Beeches. You will not shirk, for I know you are not that pore Curre which claps his Tayle betwixt his legs. Bring back the clue, and you may count upon some fit manner of thanks, whereof let these Portygee Crusados be a foretaste. You will reveal anon whither you have been guided and what you have beheld. The mind, mark you, is like a rock, easily graven with words and impressions, which although as yeeres go by they become covered with leaves and mosses are still there. This learned Doctor will teach you upon what to fix your thoughts. Be wary and in Mary's name heed well your bearings in the Bourne to be traversed. Above all, come not back to tell me you have seen, yet cannot remember, for I warrant you, I'd never forgive one that served me such a Dogge's Tricke.'

As he rose and turned away, the Italian addressed me in his slip-shod English, motioning to a chair he placed facing the open window. Having always felt shy of his conjuring, albeit knowing he durst venture

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no Capers in that presence, I was reassured in no small degree to find I was only to sitt before an open window. At first my thoughts ranne harum-scarum upon Goblins and Sprites and will-o'-the-wisps, and I could scarce forbear a shudder to think upon Mount Pleasant Mill, where I used to be taken as a boy and whereof I heard my uncle Prudent Deepegrove declare that on moonlight nights you may see the beautiful young witches naked as Susannah, riding their Distaves in mid air. Damiano began by saying his art do be like, 'Fountains abounding with Wine,' which seemed sarcasticall in one that had never given me so much as the price of a Pottle of briske Ale. Then looked he me fixedly in the eye, passed his nutt-brown hands over my head, and finally took my hand quite friendliwise in his. His discourse wandered, but of all he sayd I comprehended that presently a bird would fly to the window, and when it flew away I was to follow whithersoever it soared and no matter how far beyond the horizon and mark well where it should alight, for there must we sett to with Spade and Mattock. Whereat, remembering how the Good Book declares, 'A bird of the ayre shall carry the voice,' I felt comforted.

When he ceased speaking the World grew suddenly still,—so still that from an immeasurable distance I heard a thrush chirping; yet as it came towards me and fluttered at the window with trembling wings as though it fain would have flown in, I beheld that it was a blue bird, with gold-tipped pinions, the same as marks, wherever she builds her nest, there be gold in the ground. After which, the bird flew far—so far that following its flight for a mile, it became a speck in view and passed out of my vision, neither

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beheld I trace or token of the hiding place to which it should have been my guide. But I fell into a delightful slumber wherein I dreamt a happy Dreeme of brilliancy equal to that of the diamond the French King wears in his hatt, and the sight whereof lingered in my mind, turning my thoughts upon the radiant sparcle of Cliefden Reach.

The evening afore, I had read at bedtime, by way of sleeping draught, that chapter wherein such repetition is made of Sackbuts and Dulcimers and Psalteries. And now in the sleep Messer Damiano laid upon me, I was addressed by one wearing cloak and boots and having a great sword girt at his waist, who looked astonishing like mine Uncle Prudent Deepegrove, and who bade me play that chirruping French song Queen Henriette Marie brought from abroad, the tune whereof hath been in everyone's eares this half Centurie and the foreign name whereof signifieth 'Memory's Chime of Home.' So when I answered, 'Upon what shall I (who am no musician) play?' he gravely handed me a brace of pistols, saying, 'Fire these weapons, which will recharge themselves, at any object—these Flagons, yonder Mirror, the Sconces that flank it, this crystal Chandelier, these Vennis glasses, the Fyre-Dogges, or those illuminated windows—merely remembering what everyone knows, to aim high or low as the note is Treble or Bass.' Then seeing me still somewhat dashed, he poynted behind me, crying, 'Can'st have the harte to leave so goodly a Companie in the lurch?' And glancing backward, I beheld an Ocean of upturned faces. So while I scanned them, being not a little confounded, the Minstrels that one with another should make musique with me, hundreds in number, bearing

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Shawms, and Timbrels, and Pipes and ten-stringed Harps, arranged themselves in their sett places and at a signal began to play. Then blended those curious instruments in rich accords, like harmonies heard on the hills afar, or like the voice of Silver Bugles sounding over sea. Whereat, grown bolder, I addressed me to the task and discharged my pistols high or low according to my untutored judgment, and to my wonder the objects struck gave back a cadenced Gamut attuned to more than earthly sweetness till, when the musique ceased, I heard a long-drawn murmur as though that listening multitude had blent its myriad voices in the whispered repetition—‘Home! home, Memory’s Chime of Home!’ Then the Cavalier, motioning me aside, exclaimed: ‘Since you have listened with content to the incantation of that goodly song, I will show you *Andrew Deepegrove’s home.*’ And at the word, the scene vanished like a curtain that is rolled, and before me stretched the familiar river, with the witchery of its hanging woods—and Cliefden, its outline so uplifted and transfigured in ethereal tints of jasper and beryl and amethyst, that, with a heartbeat of profound emotion, I awoke.

Next day I perceived we were not yet clear of the effects of Master Beddingfield’s visit, for half a dozen of those bold Blades the Chesseplayers came from London bringing uncommon beautiful ladies, not meaning for all their businesse to let the Harte grow cold. And an entire morning the men were closetted with the Duke of Buckingham in the withdrawing-room, and once being summoned to fetch a draught, I found them intent, gathered about the table which

was strewn with letters. And albeit their discourse ceased upon my coming, yet a word or two betrayed it ranne upon the French King and the Dutch. Which time the ladies played Battledore and Shuttlecock, astonishing nimble, only wetting their lips once from a bowl of Sangaree. The following morning nothing would serve their turn but to ride together to Twyford to dine, I going on with two serving men and Hark-away to spread the cloth and draw the wine. And their dinner they were resolved must be something out of the ordinary, and sett about to regale themselves with viands mentioned in Scripture, and to the better dressing thereof went all together into the Inne kitchen where with merth and chatter they made more noise than a Gipsy Camp. So the table being garnished with olives, dried bacon, and salt cod by way of whett, the first dish served was that renowned mess of Red Pottage for which Esau paid so dear, wherein was stewed the flesh of a Kid with lentils and browned peas. Wherefore the Duke of Buckingham being the favourite of the flock, they dubbed him little Benjamin and his portion to be five times theirs, which none could have grudged him, Esau's Pottage being slightly Smoaked. After which were collops cut from the Fatted Calf (the publican having one hanging in his cellar); and last came the Flesh Pots of Egypt, for which Damiano claimed to possess the recipe, and a savoury mixture it was of mutton-bones, herbs, sliced-carrots and spring leeks. At the mere sight of which victuals the little Italian capered like a fly in a Tar-box, talking enough for six, albeit in the kitchen somewhat fumble-fisted with the pans and skewers. And for the shortcomings of this strange feast made they up with Rhenish and Portygee wine galore, and finished

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with moderate drams of brandy. After which they fell to singing in the Garden, which occasioned a circumstance curiously illustrating the taste and preference which an Animal may transmit to its young. For over against the Inne, during the last yeeres of the Protector was a Roundhead Chapel, which boasted so large an organ that a She-asse was kept to work a Treadmill whereby to fill its bellows. Which having a Foale, the same discovered an extraordinary fondness for musique, thus directly derived from his dam, insomuch that at the winding of a Horn, or the sound of a Catch, the pore Beeste would bray for joy. So when the Chesseplayers and their ladies having heard this tale began to sing 'Bumpers to Noll,' and 'Mending Laura's Laces,' and the asse, with head lifted above the paling and eares outstretched, made answer, I thought they would fall off their chairs for laughter, which was why one of the men covertly put an arm loverwise about his partner.

'Laws! Laws!' cried another who detected the action; for latterly, a change of fashion putting a more severe decorum in the Saddle, forbade the caressing of the fayre at table.

Before me, as I write, lie a brace of pistols which I carried that day, and which are still charged with the powder and ball Prudent Deepegrove rammed into them half a century ago. He had them with him at Marston, and the day before that action our people being hunger-bitten, cast about in rear of our camp for food. When coming to a deserted Croft, he spied a young Shoat, which to starving men was not to be sneezed at, and having caught it despite squeals and struggles, mine Uncle was dismayed to behold a Sow rush from her swine-cote to the rescue. So after a

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brief race with the Pigling in his arms and the Sow at his heels, they all three went neck and crop into a ditch, whence he was glad to come without his Booty, but with no greater hurt than his Jerkin rippit from stem to stern. And when his comrades jeered his plight, he protested he had encountered the enemy's Outpost, and I trow he would as lief have faced one of Oliver's Ironsides as have kept tryst again with that mannerless Sow.

These same pistols being in my holsters as we rode homeward through Maydenhead thicket, the Cavaliers and their ladies ambling ahead, and we following with the table furniture, I was as much disquieted as my uncle had been by the Sow at the sight of a Scaramouch who stept from the thicket and coolly poynted his Blunderbuss. Whereat one of my men rolled from his horse, the other hid behind a tree and Harkaway shrieked like a Gib-catt. I alone took some posture of defence, whipping forth my pistols, although I knew that after so many yeeres the powder must be stale. In which instant we heard a horseman riding back at such a gallop as made the horseshoes ring, and ere one could so much as say Rivo! the Duke had driven his Blade under the fellow's jaws, piercing his neck from side to side. So he sank in the dust with eyes fixed upon us, and all my lord sayd was, 'Gad, he's more of a Cut-throat than ever.' But I felt shamefaced when we found his Blunderbuss to be unloaded, and neither powder nor shot upon his bodye. Then the Deaths-man from Maydenhead hung the pore Scare-crow, all bound about with whipcord, to a tree, and I heard some dayes after he was no Swash-buckler but a decayed gentleman in want of a Crust.

After I was home again and safe in the Buttery,



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Pansie's eyes grew saucer-round at hearing what had befallen, and as I ne'er could endure to see a sweete mayd distraught, I took her on my knee and kisst her, expounding 'twas sure sign of a warm Harte that a pretty gyrl would liefer kiss than spin. But save you! was there ever a Pleasaunce (from Eden to this day) that had not its lurking Serpent? I see her still, my frecke-nosed She-cozen, peeping in at us like a Steeple-jack from the tanglewood. Wherefore I was obliged to give her a Spanish piece of eight to take the worm out of her tale-bearing tongue, or Pansie and I had been the talk of the country side. And for as much as a month after if my She-cozen and I met, the Wretch would cast Sheepe's eyes and purse her mocking mouth as one that feigns a kiss till I could have burst the buttons off my Doublet for Wroth.

So now, having ended my Chronicle, and brought buckle and thong together which awhile gone I scarce hoped to compasse, I give the Reader good-day.

Let me add, by way of Congee, that when a pore lad, living in London, and sometimes taken on a Summer Sunday to Hampton or Greenwich, or no farther than Highgate or Lambeth, I came to cherish those glimpses of venerable walks and glistening sunsets and distant hills, till, as yeeres went by, musing before many a Winter's fireside, I resolved that, Providence permitting, my last days should be spent amid the repose of some such delectable scene. And of all the choyce bitts I beheld, my boyish fancy wove a rural Patchwork of favourite peeps,—the Fleete, where it comes tumbling over Mount Pleasant mill-dam; the sweete-breathed Richmond woods; a ruddy clover-patch at Staines; the dance of crisp

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November leaves beside the Lea, and over all that joyous halo wherewith Youth finishes its pictures. And thus I became rooted in the persuasion that 'twere more comforting to look one's last upon the sunshine through Nature's rustling branches, than athwart the Gables and Chimney-pots of man.

Now that, in mature age, I have more than once revisited these Haunts of my boyhood, I find them curiously dwarfed and their glamour faded silver-grey—which reminds me how the Wise Man declares after having emptied the wine-cup to its dregs, that all the things which seemed so glorious in our prime, would be found mere shrivelled Chattels in the aftermath.

Cliefden alone, rarer than the subtlest imagining, grows day by day more incomparable. Most beautiful of all is it in November, at the fall of the leaf, when, walking through the hedgerows upon fallen and fragrant leaves, with the tree-tops thinning overhead, I pause to watch the leaf that from the topmost bough falls flickering—and remember Pansie Brighteyes.

I linger by the river, where the great poplar stands, strong as Sampson, and beside it that red oleander my lady likened to Delilah. A subtle sense of sadness dims the horizon . . . nay, the tear is mine, and I dash it impatiently away. Oh Sweethartes, as we grow older, how vain seem all our recollections, save only those which Love hath traced!

Looking from my Attic, when evening crowns the day, a tender fancy traces beyond the reality of Earth an imagined Distance fraught with such shapes and shadows as we brush against in Dreemes, which be the men and women of a bygone time. In some such way our landmarks fix themselves—the disappearance of a familiar figure from the Chimney-corner—the

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garden walk left suddenly and strangely desolate. The Chesseplayers and their merrie Dames have vanished, but here, amid the poesie of these quiet glades, albeit beyond hark of voice, they seem almost within reach of whisper.

Often, idling through these leafy aisles, when sunbeams strike aslant the branches embroidering their green with gold, I have paused with swift emotion to mark the light resting on some moss-grown tree as though there, haply, lingered a reflex of that care-free time. And once, I stood stock-still for joy to hear the blackbird whistling through the copse, hoping—and for a single wayward instant half believing—it might be Pansie Brighteyes waiting as of old beside the laburnum, where at owl-light, she gave me a spray of Love-me-forever.

I am content, in this my age, with that Philosophie which is to cherish old friends, old feasts, old loves, and never wake the sleeping sorrowe. And 'tis no indifferent relish, to my Morning-draught to muse of what rich grapes the wine was pressed that fired our Harte and thrilled our Song in those foole-happy dayes.

Last Bartholomew-tide, dusting the vellum-bound volumes in my lady's room, and handling a daintie book she cherished of Sonnets by one Will Shakspere, some musk-scented fragments of a Midwinter rose fell from the pages where her hand put it for a Marker. And the paper is faintly blurred at these significant words by the juices of the flower with a stain that looks half tear, half blood :—

Tell me thou lov'st elsewhere, but in my sight,  
Dear harte, forbear to glance thine eyes aside.

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Likewise do I place this fugitive writing as a leaf betwixt the sheaves of Yesterday and To-morrow. Or should I better say let it be as the proverbial Silver Bullet which, being spent, does little mischief, and which, shot from this mine Ambuscade of quaint old memories, perchance may lightly touch one, ages hence, who knows and loves these scenes.

## THE CONFESSION OF RUI, THE PRIEST

[DECIPHERED FROM AN EGYPTIAN PAPYRUS  
APPARENTLY WRITTEN B.C. 1725]

IN this tenth year of the reign of King Amasis, beloved of the gods, I, Rui, a priest of Isis, imprisoned in the city of Raamses, the treasure city, being questioned by the High Court of Egypt, before which I am to be tried, do write this as my defence against the crime whereof I am falsely accused. I call Horus, Anubis and Apis to witness that as for the death of Heva, the Chaldean wife of my brother Poti-pherah, whom may Osiris receive at the last, I am innocent of it, though concerning certain offences against my brother I know too well that I am guilty. And my judges, who are blest with the gift of supreme wisdom, will believe that a murderer shall perish, but that an innocent man, like unto myself, shall spend his years in prosperity.

My brother Poti-pherah, a captain of Pharaoh's guard, dwells with his wives in the city beloved of Osiris. In his house is the smell of sweet spices, and on the walls, between lofty pillars, are onyx and jasper, and in the chambers of rest are candlesticks and lavers of brass, rich vestments are there also,

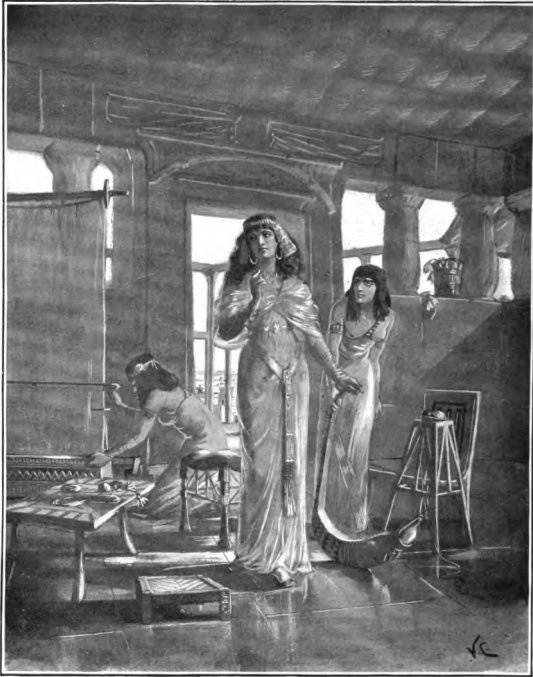
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and ointment made from the rose. Moreover, when my brother sits down to eat, clad in fine twined linen, upon a cushion of crimson silk, the handmaidens wipe his feet with perfumed napkins, while them that serve set before him fish garnished with leeks, or upon a charger the flesh of a goat, or of a hart, or of a roebuck; and beside the house is a broad garden decked with fruit trees, where, in the twilight, at the voluptuous hour, when the singers come to sing, my brother drinks wine, even old wine, which is the wine of content and giveth peace unto the wise.

Behold, this my brother came to me a year ago, saying: 'Thou knowest that I have taken a wife from out of the land of Chaldea, and my spirit is vexed because she worships not the gods of Egypt, and I have no delight in her because she feareth not Osiris neither respecteth his law. Come, therefore, thou, which art a young man and a learned priest, and live with me in my house for a season, to expound to her the wisdom of our gods.' On the following day, at the heat of the noontide, when I came to my brother's house, the slaves anointed my beard while I sat in the dark, cool hall, and I heard the faint rippling sound of a harp touched with running fingers, surpassing sweetly, so that my heart was melted as with the murmur of familiar voices—even the voices of them which are no more. Now, when I was led into the upper chamber, which hath an alabaster floor, I beheld the Chaldean wife of my brother Poti-pherah, whose name was Heva, and she was exceeding comely, even as pleasant to the eye as a cluster of ripe grapes in the vineyard. When she rose from the harp, her handmaidens, which worked

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upon skeins of many-coloured, brilliant threads, arose also and saluted me. Then saw I that Heva, as she stood before me, was clad in a fair garment, her feet being shod with fine sandals, and about her body was a curious girdle, and her eyes sparkled like dew upon the mountains. When she clapped her hands they set before me baked cakes with savoury sweets and the purple wine of content, wherewith I refreshed myself, and dwelt many days in the house of my brother Poti-pherah. Whereof each day expounded I to Heva the mysteries of Isis and of Osiris, but she turned a deaf ear to my words, and as for Horus, Apis and Anubis, verily she laughed them to scorn. Moreover talked I with her about her soul and of its eternal destiny, but she cried : ‘My soul ! first show me what is my soul, and then will I ponder its immortality.’ Also when I spoke to her of death, she said, ‘Is it not a sleep from which no cock-crow awakens ?’ So I became as one that is sorrow-bitten, and sadness came upon me like rising water, because she would not withdraw her thoughts from the magicians, the soothsayers, and the astrologers of her native land. At which time there came among us a stranger, a Hebrew, named Joseph, whom the Egyptians call Zaphnath, who knew not the gods of Egypt, and whom I hated because of his strange god. Wherefore I said unto my brother Poti-pherah, ‘Lo, thou art a wise man—yea, in thy life thou shalt seek silver and find gold : hast thou done this thing to mock me, to bring this man, a worshipper of strange gods, into this thine house to rule over us ?’ But Poti-pherah hearkened not, but put Joseph over all his household, and set his ring upon his finger, because he had found favour in his eyes. During



*"The Confession of 'Rui, the 'Priest."*





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which time Joseph often talked with Heva of the far countries beyond the turquoise land,<sup>1</sup> where they were born, till my heart stirred within me, as a voice speaking, to hear them communing, with the softness of music in the night watches, of their strange gods, of charmers and wizards, and of them that dwell by the river, the river Euphrates. My life also became like unto some strange sorrow that is wreathed about with joy; for I hated Joseph, because of his strange god, and I loved Heva, my brother's wife, seeing I am a young man and she was fairer than a south land with springs of sweet water. Nevertheless felt I as leper among men, for I said to myself: 'Am not I a priest of Isis, wherefore the love of women is not for me?'

At that time it came to pass that Heva's child died, and her heart died within her and became as a stone, wherefore she sent for her husband that he should comfort her; but behold, Poti-pherah sat at meat with his Ethiopian wife, and mourned not for the child that was dead, even the child of Heva. Then reproved I my brother, saying, 'Wilt thou, who art a wise-hearted man, drive this woman to the follies of despair?' But my brother was merry, for he and his Ethiopian wife had emptied a gourd filled with the wine of content; wherefore he mocked me, saying: 'Thy words are as wind, O priest of Isis, and thou that art celibate wilt some day learn that the man who knows not love is as one lost in the desert, whose lips are parched, and who drinks no wine.'

But that evening, when the glory of the sunset had faded, Joseph talked with Heva beside the

<sup>1</sup> Arabia Petræa.

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pomegranates upon the housetop, and his eyes brimmed with tears; whereat I knew that he thought upon Heva's sorrow, and that for this musing he became beautiful in her eyes as one that wears a crown. So that evening, and many evenings after, they knew not that I was near them behind the pomegranates hearkening to their words. For they spoke much together—Joseph telling of the pleasant fields beyond the turquoise land, where the feet of his childhood had trodden, of the vineyards and wheatfields, and the reapers binding the sheaves of corn. Also spake he of his brethren, which cast him into a desert pit that he should die, and how he had been taken thence and sold into Egypt, the sun land, even into the house of my brother Poti-pherah. And he said: 'Out of the abode of my father was I cast into a pit to become the prey of strangers, and from thence, even from the jaws of death, was I snatched that I might behold thee—the fairest of women. For thus it is written: "Joys we shall have that blossomed in the shade, and griefs that out of sweetest dreams awoke."' Whereat I saw that the words of Joseph's mouth were sweet in Heva's ears, and my soul abhorred him.

One night I lay alone upon the housetop in weariness of spirit, as one that is ill of the burning ague, and my head throbbled; and in the silence of evening, in the silence of night, and again in the silence of dawn, I prayed that Isis would send a blight upon Joseph, that he might become as a rush without water, that wilteth away; or that a sword should pierce his body so that his tongue might cleave to the roof of his mouth. Then at break of day, before the sun-rising, when the cool wind blew, I went half

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a day's journey into the desert, unto a place where dwelt a man of subtle understanding, that was wise in the ways of familiar spirits ; to whom I said : ' I know that thou art a silent man, that fetchest knowledge from afar : behold, now, my heart takes no rest in the day time nor in the night season for thinking upon the death of a man and upon my sinful love for a woman. Tell me, therefore, I pray thee, what is death and what is love, that I may ponder them hereafter in wisdom, and not as a fool.' Which, when he had heard, the man that was familiar with spirits searched the sky and considered the chambers of the South and the stars, which are the eyes of Eternity, while I waited for his words as one that eagerly looks for the dawn which shall mark the beginning of a happier day. Then, when the morning stars sang together in the east, he called to me, saying, ' Do we know more than the beasts of the earth, or are we wiser than the fowls of heaven ? Know, O priest, that the only thing in life worth thinking of is death ; and that love is the resting of the affections.'

When I heard these words, I knelt down weeping, and prayed before Isis. And Isis comforted me, saying : ' What hast thou, my son, to do with death, since, when the darkness of thy little life is ended, Osiris shall give thee the gift of everlasting life ? Furthermore, hast thou not made a covenant with me ? and how then shalt thou think upon the love of woman ?'

So I turned me again to the habitations of men, and beheld the husbandmen threshing grain upon the floor, while the labourers in the vineyard trod the fulness of the winepress ; I tarried also to watch

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the cutting of stone, the carving of wood, and the gravers of carbuncles with their graving tools ; I saw also the soldiers of Pharaoh, the brazen chariots that shone like gold, the horsemen, the slingers, and them that bear darts ; lastly, at the gate of the city, the city beloved of Osiris, rode Pharaoh's daughter upon a white ass, while three hundred slaves strewed fresh flowers before her.

When I came back into the house of my brother Poti-pherah I was heavy-hearted, insomuch that my soul dried away, for I was not able to bear the burden of my life. So I shaved my head and ate bitter herbs, thinking upon all the days of my youth, upon the days of gladness and the solemn days ; and I cried aloud, in the thick darkness of the night, ' Shall it be that Osiris will give the wife of my brother into the hand of a stranger ! ' At which thought I was faint with love of her, and the craving of my secret love was as the yearning of a miser after his lost treasure ; yet was I ashamed, and blushed to lift up my face before Isis. Nevertheless I said, ' Such a thing shall not be in the land of Egypt, the sun land ' ; wherefore I began to spy upon them by day and by night, that I might take them unawares.

It came to pass in the autumn, the evening of the year, at the time of the first ripe grapes, that my brother Poti-pherah made a feast with the music of the lute, the flower of the crimson rose, the wine cask emptied to the lees. And he sat at meat with the young men, and there were set before them flesh pots fragrant with leeks, and they became merry with wine, and when Poti-pherah had feasted plenteously he straightway rose up to dance. Now, Heva lay in her room, for her soul was sore vexed.

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Nevertheless I watched, and while the feast went on she and Joseph met together privily in a room apart, she going to meet him like a bird that flies upon outstretched wings, so that I could see the blush upon her cheeks, like the flush upon a pomegranate, as she stretched forth her white arms towards him and kissed him upon the lips and upon the brow. Then Joseph fell at her feet, crying 'O God, forgive me!' though which god he meant I know not, neither could I hear all they said for the noise of laughter and the beating of timbrels in the hall where Poti-pherah feasted. Then Heva raised Joseph from his knees, and, laying her hand upon his shoulder, said: 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, is there no place, far from the Egyptians and their gods with heads and hearts of beasts, whither we may flee ere the eyelids of the morning are opened? Here we are alike slaves, bought by the same master: let us be free in some distant country, where we may forget the past, and where I will be to thee as a flowering vine trellised upon a south wall.' But Joseph answered: 'How shall I, who wear my lord's ring upon my finger, being set by him over his household, dishonour him as an enemy, even as a thief in the night? My father, who is a just man, gave me this precept—that I should do unto others as I would be done by: how, then, shall I sin against God, against my benefactor, and against thee? If we defile our bodies on earth, our souls hereafter shall be crimson as blood; let me, therefore, depart hence from this great temptation to my own country, that, though our bodies be parted for a time on earth, yet shall our souls be joined for ever in heaven, and thou wilt be as beautiful there as here, and there

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shall our eyes meet, for we shall not be ashamed.' Then looked they fixedly upon one another, but ere they could speak again I stood before them and they were amazed. At which my blood boiled with fierce anger, my brain also burned at the thought of their love, and I raised my arms to smite Joseph, but he fled aghast from before me out of the room. Then turned I to where Heva stood, saying : ' I have but to declare to Poti-pherah what I have heard, and he will curse thee for the iniquity that thou hast conceived, and thou shalt be scourged by slaves, and Joseph, thy lover, shall be stoned to death before thine eyes—yea, his blood shall spatter thy face.' Then Heva trembled and blanched, gazing fixedly upon me without speaking, for she was a woman, and sore afraid. ' Notwithstanding,' I said, ' thou mayest save his life if thou wilt lift up thy voice and cry mightily, and when the household shall come, then shalt thou declare that this stranger raised his hand upon thee to do thee violence, and thou shalt point to his garment which lieth upon the floor. So mayest thou be commended, and although Joseph be cast into prison, not a hair of his head shall perish, and thy secret shall be as the pearl at the bottom of the sea.' But Heva spurned me, saying : ' Thou man of unclean lips, such infamy were more bitter than death : go, tell whom thou wilt thy tale, and I will declare that I am innocent, that the world may judge which of us is a liar.'

Then I turned to leave her, to declare all these things to Poti-pherah ; seeing which Heva caught me swiftly, sobbing and saying, ' Be it as thou commandest, O cruel heart ' ; and she lifted up her voice and cried aloud, so that they which feasted

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arose, and Poti-pherah with his young men stood before us. Then Heva said, as I had bidden her : 'This stranger whom thou hast set over thy house raised his hand upon me to do me violence, but I lifted up my voice, whereupon he let fall his garment and fled away.' And I, Rui the priest, standing by, said : 'I heard the voice of Heva and ran hither, and behold, the stranger whom thou hast set over thy house fled out of my sight.' Then Poti-pherah commended Heva, saying : 'I will make this thing known unto the world, that all generations may know that thou didst lift up thy voice.' Then was Joseph brought into the room before all the company, and Poti-pherah smote him in the face and took off the ring from his finger, and commanded him to be cast into prison.

For many days after these things had come to pass I walked abroad in bitterness or lay sleepless by night on my bed beneath the stars, with a dreadful sound like the clamour of Heva's voice ringing ever in my ears, crying out that my love was a sin against my brother. Wherefore, when Poti-pherah took the ring that had been set upon Joseph's finger and set it upon mine, saying, 'Thou, O priest, hast been the guardian of mine honour,' I felt ashamed. Which ring was of fine gold set about a ruby as red as the blood of a pigeon sacrificed upon the altar. Wherein I beheld a glory greater than the glory of scarlet flowers when the dew rests on them in the morning, likewise saw I there figures fairer than the floating forms of loves ; and when the sunlight rested upon the ruby it sparkled as a burning censer, with gleams that seemed to me of love and hate even as the molten ardours of my own soul. Often sat I thus



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in the glow of the noontide, pursuing in the light of that fateful stone the shining paths of my musings, and finding in it a reflection of my lurid dreams and of the face of Isis, the mother of love.

It happened that one night in a dream, in a vision of the night, in slumber upon my bed, I dreamt that I wandered back through the cycles of time to the golden days when the gods were upon earth making love to the beautiful daughters of men. In which dream I sat down to rest by the water-side, and the willows of the brook covered me with their shade ; where no man passed save only the lotus-eaters that dwell in the dim garden of Oblivion, who, as they went, talked of the clasping of hands and the strewing of flowers, whose faces are radiant as the day, for they have put from them the cares of life. But of a sudden came Heva, and she was alone. And she was beautiful as a bird with outstretched wings, even as a bird of rare plumage ; and she came close to me, and her breath was like the sweet-briar of the valley. Then said I within myself, 'She is a morsel fit for the gods : verily she shall die.' And I walked up and down communing with myself, murmuring, 'She is the fairest of all the daughters of men : she shall be the bride of Osiris.' At which thought I laughed—laughed till the lotus-eaters paused, saying one to the other : 'Lo, he is mad !' Then an evil spirit within me awoke, saying : 'That which thou art about to do, see thou do quickly and tell no man.' Wherefore in my dream I caught Heva by the throat, and knelt upon her bosom, clutching her fair neck till my fingers sank in her flesh, which I heeded not till she was dead and her soul in the arms of Osiris.

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Now, when I awoke from my slumber, behold it was a dream, and I arose from my bed and was glad, for it was the dawning of the day. But before the house was awake, or ever Poti-pherah stirred, there came a great wailing from the hand-maidens, for on the floor of her chamber Heva lay strangled to death, with deep finger-prints upon her throat. Then I cried aloud to know who had done this evil deed; whereat they answered, 'It is none other than thou, O priest of Isis,' and they led me away, and carried Heva to Pelusium, the city of the dead. Nevertheless I, Rui, a priest of Isis, do solemnly call Horus, Anubis and Sethet to witness that it was but a dream.

## MADAME RÉCAMIER'S SECRET

THIS brilliant and beautiful woman's career, and her extraordinary power over the social world she influenced and adorned, are the theme of panegyrics that have ended by raising her to a level of almost mythical perfection. We are told that she possessed the physical symmetry of a Medicean Venus; that she charmed with marvellous intellectual fascination; that her tact, grace and kindness won all hearts; that in the midst of a dissolute Court, and in an atmosphere of adulation, her character retained its maiden purity; that age changed her only to confer new and subtle attractions. So prominent a place does she seem to have filled, and so familiar has she been made to us during the forty-four years that have elapsed since her death, that our imagination can recall the witchery of her presence, the enchantment of her thought and speech, and the spotless soul that looked from her eyes. We gaze at her as one may study a marble nymph, carved in unalterable youth and beauty. Moreover, she appears against a background of intense dramatic action, embracing the most sanguinary period of the Revolution, and the triumphs and disasters of the Napoleonic era.

The life of a woman so gifted as Madame Récamier is reputed to have been, offers more than

the routine of journeys, *fêtes* and correspondence with which biographers usually load their pages. In her who fascinated the renowned men and women of half Europe, we perceive the finest type of French feminine character at a period when Parisian society retained much of the traditions and refinements of the *ancien régime*, combined with an impulse resulting from military and political events and from the scientific inspiration of this century. And it is in the course of an analysis of the intimate circumstances of her history that the oddities and contradictions of her relations with the man to whom she was married become noticeable. Varied and exciting as her life must have been, she is continually repining over some unsatisfied desire, some latent affection that finds no object, some grief that seems the passionate longing of an empty and breaking heart. Through all her correspondence, and in allusions to her in letters which those who knew her best exchanged, we are conscious of a mystery that at two periods—namely, when she urges the dissolution of her marriage, and upon her husband's death—confronts us with startling distinctness. There is a secret woven through the years of her married life that casts a sadness upon them, and to which reference is clearly made by so many persons, that we may wonder how it could so long have remained unknown to the world.

At the time of their marriage M. Récamier was forty-two years of age and Juliette Bernard fifteen, thus presenting the disparity of nearly twenty-seven years. They bore a marked likeness to one another, possessing the same classically regular features, the same hair and eyes, the same trifling mannerisms that go so far to make a personal resemblance.

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Immediately after their marriage M. Récamier established his bride with her mother at Clichy, where he dined with them almost daily, spending his mornings at his counting-house, and habitually returning to Paris in the evening ; and this singular *ménage*, or one resembling it, continued for years. He treated Juliette with unfailing kindness and indulgence, but there is no contradiction to be found to the declaration of many who knew them intimately that they never lived together as man and wife. This has been accounted for by the conjecture that Madame Récamier had an intense abhorrence of the marital relation, or by a surmise, imagined after her death, that she suffered from a physical infirmity. Both these suppositions are effaced by the most extraordinary event in her life, namely, her resolve in 1807 to sever her 'filial relations' with M. Récamier, and marry Prince Augustus of Prussia, whose ardent courtship and passionate love-letters must have given her no doubtful intimation that he would prove a most unplatonic husband. The letters exchanged between the Récamiers at this strange juncture are probably among the most remarkable ever penned to one another by husband and wife. Madame Récamier calmly declares that, yielding to the assiduities of the Prince of Prussia, as well as to her own inclination, she contemplates severing the bond that has joined them for thirteen years. To this monstrous announcement M. Récamier replies without temper, confining himself to expressions of chagrin that a divorce, with its attendant scandal, should embitter his last years, now that, in the twilight of life, he had grown infirm, needy and friendless, living upon the fragments of the fortune

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he had wrecked. But he admitted that the tie which united them was one the Church would declare null, and agrees, if Juliette requires it, to meet her at some place outside France, where they can concert the legal measures to be taken, and seek to moderate the scandal he dreads in Paris. Compliance in a husband rarely goes further, but this astonishing situation explains itself if we may believe that M. Récamier was addressing, not his wife, but his daughter.

Although it is evident that Madame Lenormant, who is Madame Récamier's chief biographer, believed her to be M. Récamier's daughter, her intimations give no adequate clue, and the strange story remains a mystery but half revealed. The evidence, however, points to the conclusion that Juliette Bernard, when a girl, was married to her father, and that she carried this secret in silence to her grave. What motive could have prompted this revolting semblance of a marriage, and perhaps forced it upon her? Did she know her relationship to M. Récamier when she married him—this man who, in her childhood, had given her dolls and sugar-plums? or what event betrayed it?

Her mother, Julie Matton Bernard, was a bourgeoisie of striking beauty, with bright black eyes, and rosy face, and fair white neck, and daintily suggestive *embonpoint*. Her character was marked by what is sometimes called feminine levity, though it may be questioned whether this quality is more distinctively a trait of one sex than of the other. She was married to a notary of mediocre intelligence, who, nevertheless, sufficiently understood the nature of the young and handsome M. Récamier's visits to disown the paternity of Juliette. It was the familiar story of a dull and uninteresting husband, absorbed

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in the routine of his duty, and an attractive and sprightly wife left to beguile her solitude as best she might. Prior to the Revolution the Récamier and Bernard families were established at Lyons, and it was at that city that M. Récamier became a constant visitor at the Bernards'. This *liaison* was probably not the banker's first gallantry, and it certainly was not his last. His subsequent financial embarrassments, which were mainly due to rash speculations, were considerably increased by the heavy sums withdrawn from his capital, to be spent no one but himself knew how. Half his life was devoted to the pursuit of beautiful society women, and he availed himself of his wealth to allure them with those dazzling and magnificent gifts by which, in all ages, the fair and frail sex has been tempted. In his banking-house were young men who passed as his nephews—and he had as many nephews as a Cardinal—some of whom bore to him the same personal resemblance that was so conspicuous in the daughter of Madame Bernard.

The marriage of Jacques Récamier with Juliette took place precipitately, April 24th, 1793, in the midst of the Reign of Terror. As a rich man and an aristocrat, the banker had suddenly found himself '*suspecte*.' The Bernard family, on the contrary, were violent republicans. In those days to become '*suspecte*' usually resulted in a visit to the guillotine. Those were days and nights of swift and appalling dangers, and it is conjectured that an extreme peril led to the device, which, probably Madame Bernard imagined, to avert suspicion from her former lover by allying him with her own ultra-revolutionary family. This artifice of a marriage was perhaps intended merely as an expedient for a few months,

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until the fury of the storm was spent ; but it lasted a lifetime. Once only did Juliette seek to break the unnatural link that distorted her life—when, as we have seen, she yielded to the suit of the Prince of Prussia, and resolved to cast off the fetter which her girlhood had accepted, and *marry*. Had she and M. Récamier been lawfully wedded, she would evidently not have entertained the project of a divorce, which the Roman Church does not recognise ; nor even of a separation, for which, in this instance, there was legally no cause of action. But if their union was one that both Church and State would instantly declare void *ab initio*, her motive and its justice are apparent. And, similarly, does it not seem a solecism that M. Récamier should have objected to this divorce, and that she should ultimately have abandoned it, merely because of a possible scandal, unless the facts of their case were such that neither of them dared face the world after those facts were known? Was it not for very shame's sake that he pleaded with her, and that she yielded? And it is remarkable that when their union was eventually severed by M. Récamier's death in 1830, not one of the letters written to her by half a dozen intimate friends, alludes to her loss as the bereavement of a wife, but all point to the removal of one who had filled a parental relationship. Madame Lenormant refers to this event with the suggestive comment, '*En le perdant, Madame Récamier crut perdre une seconde fois son père.*'

These facts present a striking chain of evidence : M. Récamier's gallant proclivities and his constant visits to Madame Bernard ; M. Bernard's refusal to recognise Juliette as his child ; the personal



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resemblance of Juliette to M. Récamier; the odd *ménage* at Clichy, corroborated by the fact that this husband and wife never lived together; Madame Récamier's ceaseless refrain of an unsatisfied affection, and her resolve to cut short this wicked farce of marriage and wed the Prince of Prussia; M. Récamier's admission that she can terminate their union if she chooses, at the same time entreating her to spare them both a monstrous scandal; his peril, as an aristocrat, during the Reign of Terror, furnishing a reason sufficient to have suggested the thought of this marriage to Madame Bernard; and finally, the letters of those who must have known the secret, in which M. Récamier's death is referred to in language which common sense could not have addressed to a wife at the loss of a husband. Can all these be mere chance coincidences?

It cannot surprise one to know that, when she had grown old, Madame Récamier loved solitude and the reveries to which sweet, soft music inclines. No wonder, either, that she invariably refused to go through the mockery of writing her memoirs. What an empty recapitulation they would have been, without some allusion to the circumstances of which she was the living victim! And what marvellous meditations and souvenirs must have been hers who was married, yet had no husband; who was loved and *fêted* and worshipped, as may fall to the lot of one woman in a century, yet who loved no man unreservedly through all the fiction and unreality of her life; who repelled the amorous advances of Bonaparte, and was punished by him with years of exile, yet lived to see his stupendous fall; whose girlhood was passed amid the anguish and bloodshedding of the Revolution, and

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whose later years faded away in the breathless calm that succeeded the exhaustion of the Napoleonic wars. But, above all, through those silent musings, how sharply must have rung the minor key, 'the undertone of tears,' in the bitterness of a regret for her youth that had gone, and which, however brilliant before the world, had been empty and heartless and cold beneath the weight of her extraordinary secret !

THE END

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